

# **BANDWAGON**

**THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

**MARCH - APRIL 2003**



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## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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**FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER**

**Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editor**

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### THE FRONT COVER

The cover photograph shows Pat White with one of the Hawthorn tigers on Sterling and Reid Bros. Circus in 2002.

This is the third time Pat White has appeared on a *Bandwagon* cover. Photo courtesy of Sterling and Reid Bros. Circus.

### THE BACK COVER

This illustration was on the back cover of the 1922 Ringling-Barnum Circus courier. The same design was used on various sizes of lithographs. It is from the Pfening Archives

### CHS WEB SITE

Since its introduction in August 2002 the use of the Circus Historical Society web site has grown each month. The first month there were 265 visits (hits). In February 2003 there were 895 visits and in March there up to 55 visits per day. The CHS site is now available on ten distinct Internet search servers.

The site consists of ten different parts, including a membership application and a registration form for the 2003 convention. We have had many guestbook entries (responses) with a variety of questions. Each is

answered. Twenty new members have come from the web site. We continue to commend and appreciate Judy Griffin, web master.

The CHS Internet address is <http://www.circushistory.org>.

### NEW MEMBERS

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5706 40th Ave,  
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Susan M. Darcy 4337  
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Austin, TX 78737

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# *The Artist and the Circus*



Gifford Beal (American, 1879-1956), *Tanya*, 1930, lithograph, 23 3/4" x 16"

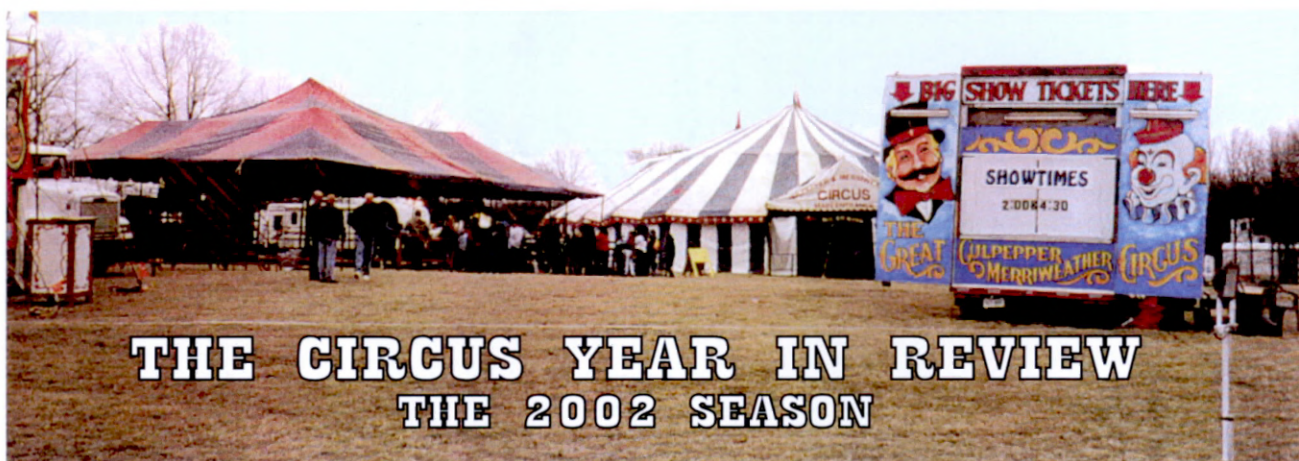
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By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

The great circus sage Leonard B. "Hoxie" Tucker once said: "When the stock market goes down, the circus business goes down too." That was likely the case in 2002. The sagging American economy was the culprit. Most shows survived the season, but brought little money back to the barn.

As this review of the 2002 circus season unfolds it is important to understand the changes have taken place in recent years. The changes have not been duly noticed as they slowly took place.

Al Stencell put it well when he said the three ring circus has been placed in a sausage grinder and what came out was a one ring show, in a European style big top.

Already making the change over in recent years to a one ring format were Vargas, Vidbel, Bentley Bros., Walker Bros., Culpepper & Merriweather, Kelly-Miller, Royal Hanneford, Elaine Zerbini, Tarzan Zerbini. Big Apple, UniverSoul, Circo Mundial, Circus Chimera, Circus Flora, Circus Smirkus and Circus Sarasota started as one ringers. All of the Mexican circuses playing the United States were European-style one ringers.

In 2002 L. E. Barnes, Roberts Bros. and Circo Fantastico did not return to the road. But another one ringer, UniverSoul No. 2 joined the business.

Less quiet was the creeping influence of PeTA and other ani-

mal rights organizations. The first to topple was Big Apple, which did away with elephants.

Additional circuses climbed on the Internet in 2002. Shows with Internet web sites included Ringling-Barnum, Beatty-Cole, Carson & Barnes, Kelly-Miller, Circus Vargas, Garden Bros., Cirque du Soleil, Circus Smirkus, Walker Bros., Big Apple, New Pickle, Circus Boreal, Royal Hanneford, Hanneford Family Circus, Circus Chimera, Circus Flora, Circus Juventas, New Shanghai, Bindlestiff, Hamid's Circus Royal, Yankee Doodle, UniverSoul, George Carden, Cirque Eos, Cheval Theatre, Cirque Eloize, the Nerveless Nocks and Tarzan Zerbini.

Sterling and Reid Bros. used the Internet as a marketing tool. Their adult two for one and kids tickets contained the show's web site, [www.funcircus.com](http://www.funcircus.com). The route and

The Sterling and Reid Bros. Circus Internet web site.

The opening day of Culpepper & Merriweather Circus. Harry L. Kingston photo.

ticket information were listed as well as a number of professional photographs of the feature acts. It was very well produced. Circus Vargas (<http://www.circusvargas.com>) used a similar web site, listing the route and show times as well as photos of the acts in the performance.

To many Americans, Canada's Cirque du Soleil has become the circus of choice. This organization has taken the world by storm with its no animal theatrical presentations. Its productions have drawn a new constituency of upper level customers willing to pay outlandish admission prices. The shows compete with opera and symphonies for attendees.

Traditional old time circus goers and fans cringe at the success of Soleil, but this new wave type of show is a fact of life.

Guy Laliberte, founded the show in Montreal in 1984. The first performance included 73 musicians, acrobats, stilt-walkers, fire-eaters and other entertainers. It was presented in an 800-seat blue and yellow big top. By 1985 the original tent was abandoned for one seating 1,500. In 1990 a new show was presented in a 2,500-seat tent. Two new productions were introduced. In 1993 the first permanent venue opened in Las Vegas. In 1995 Saltimbanco premiered in another 2,500-seat tent. In 1998 the first aquatic show "O" opened in the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. Since its beginning Cirque du Soleil

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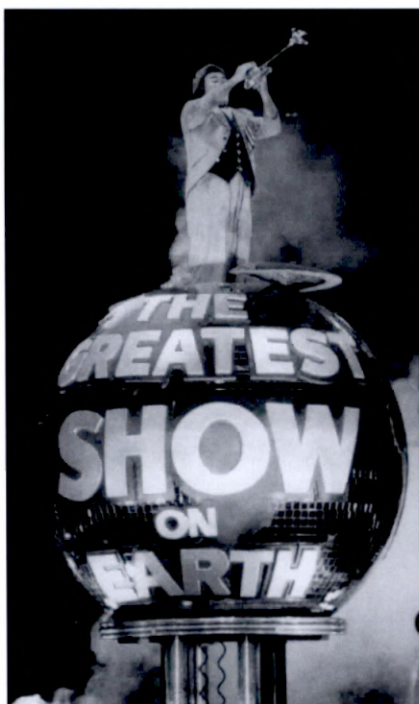
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SRBC - Columbus, OH - Feb. 24-26 - CHILD	Details
SRBC - Dayton, OH - Feb. 28-Mar. 2 - ADULT	Details
SRBC - Cleveland, OH - Mar. 4-5 - ADULT	Details
SRBC - Cleveland, OH - Mar. 4-5 - CHILD	Details
SRBC - Erie, PA - Mar. 6-7 - ADULT	Details
SRBC - Erie, PA - Mar. 6-7 - CHILD	Details
SRBC - Clarksburg, WV - Mar. 8-9 - ADULT	Details
SRBC - Clarksburg, WV - Mar. 8-9 - CHILD	Details
SRBC - Upper Marlboro, MD - Mar. 10-11 - ADULT	Details

has played to 30 million people in Canada, the United States, the Far East and Europe.

In 2002 eight units played in Europe, Singapore and North America. A new unit, Varekai, opened in Montreal on April 24, 2002. Some of the acts were Anton Cheinokov, aerialist; Andrew and Kevin Atherton, strap act; Oleg Ouchakov and Tatianna Gousarova, acrobats; John Gilkry, clown and; Claudio Carneiro, comedy and Olga Pikhienko, hand balancing.

The show then played Quebec City and Toronto, where it was viewed by the Circus Historical Society at its convention. It then moved to Philadelphia followed. As in the past the new unit was built from scratch. The organization has grown to become the largest theatrical company in the world. It has found its audience.

David Larible, star of the 2002 Ringling-Barnum Circus. Ed Meals photo.



The Cirque du Soleil Varekai lot layout at the opening in Montreal. Photo courtesy of Cirque du Soleil.

The Ringling-Barnum Circus Blue unit was in winter quarters in Tampa, Florida from November 12 to December 31 rehearsing the 132nd edition of the Greatest Show on Earth. The opening was January 3 in Tampa.

Two of the features, David Larible and Silvia Zerbini, were graduates of Kaleidascap and had remained under contract to the Feld organization. Other featured acts were T. M. The Gator Guy (Ted McRea); Sara Houck's tiger act; and Crazy Wilson's space wheel. McRae and Wilson toured with Beatty-Cole in 2000. McRae had trouble in handling the alligators and lost a finger early in the season. He was replaced by the animal's owner Tahar Douis for a while. McRae lost additional fingers later in the season. Other features were Mei Ling Dey, contortion/hand balancing;

the Tabares and Nerves, flying act; and Jon Weiss, cannon. Kevin Venardos was ringmaster and David Killinger was bandmaster.

An Animal Open House was erected at locations where space allowed. Anyone with a ticket to the circus was admitted to view the animal display. The elephants roamed in a large open space. The tiger cages were connected to a steel arena exercise area. The lead stock and horses were shown in stalls in a tent. The same type of animal display was also added to the Red unit.

The Blue unit carried 12 elephants, including five young ones, all American born.

The unit traveled on 57 cars, including a new private car for David Larible. The train included 4 stocks, 34 coaches, 2 concession cars and 17 flats.

After playing St. Petersburg and Orlando the unit showed Birmingham, Alabama; Greenville, South Carolina; Greensboro, North Carolina; Norfolk, Richmond, and Hampton, Virginia before starting the New York area venues at East Rutherford, New Jersey; Uniondale, New York and Madison Square Garden from March 21 to April 7. Philadelphia was shown April 17-28. After playing Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania on June 5-9 the show made a long jump to Oklahoma City June 14-16. The California tour

The entrance to the Ringling-Barnum Animal Open House. Fred Pfening photo.





The Ringling-Barnum Blue train in California. Jerry Cash photo.

began in Sacramento September 4-8. After showing Tacoma, Washington September 12-15 it headed back east. Salt Lake City, Utah and Denver, Colorado, playing two locations, closed the Western tour and a long jump was made to Cleveland, Ohio on October 25 to November 3, Rosemont and Chicago, Illinois were played in November and then a fast run to winter quarters was made with a single stand in Savannah, Georgia, where the season closed on December 12.

The Ringling-Barnum Red Unit laid over in Orlando, Florida for rehearsals from December 10 to 29, 2001, and then opened the season in Sunrise, Florida on January 1. Bello Nock and the performance was the same as in 2001 with the exception of Jon Weiss who left the show. The unit traveled on 54 cars, 4 stocks, 31 coaches, 2 concession cars and 17 flats. One flat carried a water truck and a light plant trailer shades of the old tented circus. The zebra, all but four camels, llamas and the Cardin elephant Bo moved overland on trucks. Tim Holan was trainmaster. All employees of the Red unit received a little folder explaining train information. Under general information it said: "The circus train is made up of 35 conventional passenger cars on the head end, followed by 2 container flats and 17 piggyback flats on the rear end. Of the 35 passenger cars, there are 4 stocks (baggage cars) behind the locomotives, where elephants, horses and other large animals ride standing, and 31 coaches, which are the living quarters for circus personnel and their families, generators, maintenance shops and related facilities. The 2

container flats (actually box cars) are for concession storage. The 17 flats at the rear end of the train carry all necessary equipment, props, vehicles and caged animals."

The route took the show through Florida, South and North Carolina,

Georgia. A long jump took the train from Atlanta, Georgia to Cincinnati, Ohio, February 22 to March 3. Two locations were played in Washington, D.C., March 20 to April 7. After playing Charleston, West Virginia, May 25-25 the summer layover lasted until the show played Tupelo, Mississippi, June 10-11. By June 27-30 the show was in Austin, Texas.

After New Orleans, Louisiana, August 21-25 a long jump took the show to Moline, Illinois, August 29 to September 2. Ten days were shown in Boston from September 10 to 20. The show closed in St. Louis, Missouri, November 13-17.

Three elephants were born at the Ringling-Barnum Center for Elephant Conservation in 2002. Rudy arrived in January; Asha in March and P. T. in May. Sara was born in April 2001 and Gunther in November 2001. This brought the total elephant births to fifteen. The compound is located in Polk County, Florida.

The sad elephant news was the passing of King Tusk on December 21 at the Ringling elephant retirement facility in northern Florida. In recent years he had developed osteoarthritis. The elephant reached a point where everyday movement was painful. He was brought to America by Ben Davenport, owner of Dailey Bros. Circus, as part of a group of seven selected by trainer Louis Reed who brought him from Mysore, India to the United States in 1947. The elephant was named Tommy. In 1953 Tommy was sold to Tony Diano. After Diano retired in 1986 he sold Tommy, Calcutta, Mysore, Minnie and Dolly to Ringling. In

1987 Tommy was with the Red unit with a new name, King Tusk.

On October 30 Feld Entertainment, Inc. announced the appointment of Julie Robertson as Senior Vice President of marketing. Robertson was formally with the Creative Marketing Group. On November 13 Kenneth Feld appeared on the CBS Early Show.

Two shows were in a classification of their own.

The Big Apple Circus 2002 season actually opened in September 2001 in Dulles, Virginia. The new show was titled "Big Top Doo Wop," based on a "50's" theme.

Barry "Grandma" Lubin returned to the show. On occasion Lubin was replaced by his stand-in Mark Gindick. Paul Binder was ringmaster and Bob Slowik was bandmaster. Clowns were Dick Monday and Tiffany Riley. Other acts included the Olate family, dogs; Katja Schumann, horses; Valdis Yanovskis and Regina Dobrovitskaya, aerial acrobatics; Nevidovski and Katherine Binder, acrobatics on two horses; the Svensons, comedy horse riding; the Jokers, flying trapeze; Emile Cary, juggling; Justin Case, bike act; and the Maorov troupe, acrobatics.

Next came the eleven and one half weeks engagement at New York City's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts starting in October and ending the first week of 2002.

The show then went quickly to the Atlanta area at Stone Mountain Park. It bypassed its previous winter quarters in Florence, South Carolina and laid over in late January and February before opening the second part of the tour with a three-week's stand. By then the Russian flying act had left and was replaced by a lady

The new Big Apple Circus bucket seating. Paul C. Gutheil photo.





The UniverSoul number two unit in Columbus, Ohio. Fred Pfening photo.

aerialist working on a big ring. While the show was in Atlanta it was day and dated by Ringling-Barnum Red unit, Sterling and Reid Bros. and UniverSoul.

Big Apple next turned north to play Bridgewater, New Jersey, where a new Italian seating system was delivered. The show had opened using sixteen-year-old seats. The new seating was set up in the parking lot. During a two-day break in performances the old seats were removed and the new ones were installed in the big top. The new seats were all individual bucket seats. Most of the old seats were benches. The new seating reduced the total number of available seats in the house, but provided additional prime ringside sets while eliminating some less desirable grandstand locations.

In April and May the show played the Fan Pier in Boston. The South Shore Concert Band played a center ring concert on a weekend. In late May the show returned to the New York City area with stands in Queens, Long Island and Nyack.

Two New England towns, Charlestown, Rhode Island and Hanover, New Hampshire, finished the season, closing July 23. During the season 311 performances were given in ten locations. Only three shows were cancelled, all of them were private parties planned for New York City and booked prior to September 11th, then cancelled by the sponsor after the World Trade Center disaster.

A crew from WABS television in New York followed the show during the season, filming a one hour documentary. The program aired in metropolitan New York viewing area in December.

In August rehearsals began on the

25th Anniversary edition of the Big Apple Circus.

The show sponsored an entry in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade for a second year. The United States bandwagon was supplied by the

Circus World Museum and was pulled by an eight-horse hitch of Percherons. The South Shore Circus Band played atop the wagon. Clown Barry Rubin was featured as Grandma, riding a skateboard down Broadway.

In May the Big Apple Clown Care unit received a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The program used professional clowns who make visits in hospitals, providing juggling, mime and music.

A 200 page coffee table sized book on the twenty-five year history of the Big Apple Circus was published. It contained historic photographs and anecdotes. The book was offered to the public through booksellers and the show's concession department.

Cedric Walker's UniverSoul Platinum Circus No. 1 unit opened the season in Miami, Florida February 1-10, with a live band, the first in the show's history. The acts included the S15 Flyers, trapeze performers; Lunga, contortionist; the Soulful Aboriginal Dancers from Australia and the Woodcock elephants presented by Benny Williams. A feature was a giraffe, owned by Johnny Lam.

The show then moved to hometown Atlanta, February 14 to March 3. It then headed north to play Philadelphia, Newark, Brooklyn and Harlem, Washington D.C., Baltimore, New Haven, Boston, Buffalo, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Chicago.

The show played Cincinnati August 28 to September 23. Ringmaster Casual Cal Dupree and his sidekick Zeke wove the acts together. The performance included African dancing and acrobatics; pyramid builders; a trampoline

act; a pole act; a two person balancing number; the Flying Montavos; the Black Bros., dancing; and the Three Little Sisters, contortion.

The UniverSoul Circus No. 2 unit "Roots, Rags and Rhythms" opened in Tampa, Florida. On February 1 four members of the Willy Family fell from the high wire.

The unit played Columbus, Ohio, May 8-12 and then moved to Milwaukee, May 15-19. The entire show appeared to be moving on mostly leased tractors and semis. A number of box-like structures were used as dressing rooms and as the ticket office.

The big top was smaller than on the No.1 show. A distinct feature was the raised ring, perhaps five feet off the ground. The music was taped and quite loud. The lighting was first class.

Cecil Armstrong, played the role of Casual Cal Dupree on the big unit. He blended the acts together, but did not follow Depree's style of talking about being a better person. The acts included an elaborate opening number; Veronica Williams on trapeze, working in a blaze of lasers; Olate's dogs; a limbo, fire and stilt dance number; Jean Claude Belmat, strap act; the King Charles bicycle act; the Willie family, high wire; Ameara Diamon presenting the Nestor Torres nine cats; the Ayak brothers on trapeze, now working in shoes as opposed to bare footed; Richardo Sosa, hand balancing contortionist; the Dragon Masters, acrobatic break dancers and Terry Frisco with three Carson & Barnes elephants.

The traditional large under canvas organizations conducted their usual extended seasons.

The Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros.

The Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in Denville, N.J. in May. Paul Gutheil photo.



Circus opened the season on March 6-7 in DeLand, Florida. The performance included Clayton Rosaire, 3 tigers, 2 lionesses and 1 male lion; Valery Tsoraev, house cats; Dotsenko troupe, space wheel, Russian bar and rope skipping; The Ladies of Kazakstan, aerial perch; Stefi, Eli and Dani, hair hang; Spec, parade of performers and animals; Gloria Bale, liberty ponies; Garcias, high wire; the Russian Air Force, flying act; Chimerical, strap act; Valery and Company dog act; Bonnie Bale and Adam Hill, elephants and Eli Pamoukov, cannon. The show was staged and directed by John W. Pugh and Elvin Bale. Christopher Connors was ringmaster and Lee Ketchum was bandmaster.

When the circus was in Tom's River, New Jersey on August 17 Konstantin Ovsyannikov, a member of the Russian Air Force flying act fell forty feet to the ground.

The Carson & Barnes Circus invested in a new lighting system using spotlights and banks of colored lights that really brightened the big top interior. A new red, white and blue marquee was added. The midway souvenir trailer was remodeled with ticket windows on the incoming side. Two new midway light towers were added.

The season opened in Dennison, Texas, March 21-22. At the opening a 120 foot round top with three 40s was used to house three rings. At LaPorte, Texas on March 29 two additional 20-foot middles were added providing room for two additional rings.

The performance included the Gonzales Duo, aerial cradle; Manual Luna, aerial; Pamela Marufo, head

The Carson & Barnes elephant act on July 4. John Polacsek photo.



balancing; Gabriella Cavallini, lyre and trapeze; Evgueni Baranok, tigers; Manual and Maritza, and Enrique and Rosa Boccardo, space wheels; Cindi Cavallini, dressage horse and Friesian Stallions; Marina, rope routine; Tim Frisco, baby elephant Jenny and the big elephant act; Pamela Sue and Gabriella Cavallini, hula hoops; and the Cavallini family, tetterboard.

Albert and Anita Vonderheid joined the show to handle the petting zoo and front door. During the first weekend Jenny Fresco fell from an elephant and broke her right wrist.

In July manager/owner Garry Byrd sent a number of trucks, most of the elephants, and some big top middles back to winter quarters in Hugo, Oklahoma.

On August 9 an elephant semi overturned en route to Rhinebeck, New York on the way from Rens-



sear. The truck was carrying two non-performing bulls. The animals were removed after cutting a hole in the trucks roof. They were not injured.

The show closed on November 10 at Ft. Smith, Arkansas. It played 39 two-day stands and 10 three-day stands. The shortest jump was 19 miles from Chickasha to Andarko, Oklahoma on April 23.

The longest jump of 167 miles was from Jasper to Linden, Louisiana on October 14. Total mileage for the season was 13,508 miles.

Circus Vargas, operated by K & M Productions, continued its one ring format under a European big top seating 2,500 people. A food wagon was on



The Circus Vargas midway and marquee. Bob Kellogg photo.

the midway along with a petting zoo, snake show and a kiddy ride. It played almost entirely in California, with a side trip to Las Vegas.

James Edward Dockery was ringmaster. The acts included Susan Lacey with a Hawthorn 10 white tiger act; Tosca Zoppe, liberty ponies; Valery Serebryakoc, Russian clown; Genaddi and Svetlana, juggling, and jump-roping; Vladimir Kopiev, dogs;

The Kelly-Miller Circus on opening Day. Harry L. Kingston photo.

Los Amelianos, comedy taxi; Eleina Shohena, aerialist; Anuschka Bouglione, hula-hoops; Los Antons, balancing perch; Karl and Jody Winn, space wheel; Princess Stephanie, contortion; Chip Arthurs, elephant and Casper Brothers, rola-bola.

The same number of medium sized and small circuses returned to the road in 2002.

David Rawls' Kelly-Miller Circus opened in Hugo, Oklahoma March 16. New to the show were four seat wagons, making a total of five. A red, blue and yellow big top made its first appearance. The show had 3 elephants, 2 camels, 3 horses and a pony and a dog act.

The show played Jefferson, Texas



Walker Bros. Circus ticket wagon. Robert Smith photo.

on April 4. On the midway were the ticket wagon, a novelty stand, camel and pony rides, concessions, a snake show and a moon bounce.

Tom Tomashek returned with a three-piece band. The performance included the Perez family, flying trapeze, space wheel, Russian swing, hula-hoops and hanging perch; Luba Tomashek, plate spinning; Duley Vital, hair hang; Rosales Trio, hand and chair balancing and strap act; Roy and Cindy Wells, 2 camels, 2 llamas and 2 horses, the show's elephants and high school riding; Jennifer Walker, cloud swing; Laura and Jennifer Walker, dogs and pony; Benito and Duley Vitale, juggling. Luba Tomashek, Harland Conn and Kevin Ryan were clowns. By May 10 the show was in Connersville, Indiana.

It closed on October 27 in Talihina, Oklahoma. The longest jump was 126 miles from Tallmadge to Marrietta, Ohio. The shortest move was 9 miles from Fox Hills to McHenry, Illinois in September.

Walker Bros. Circus opened an indoor route at West Union, Ohio on January 17. The show played Xenia, Ohio on January 21. The performance was presented in front of a red, white and blue curtains, with a back door in the center. A single ring was used with music on tapes accompanied by drummer Dennis Sherman.

The show received a new red and yellow bale ring big top and a new marquee for its under canvas tour. Jon-Jon Walker was boss canvasman. An office-concession semi was on the midway along with a pony ride and slide.

It played Reedsport, New York on May 6. The performance included Roxanna's birds; Coco, clown; Jason Walker, juggling and big and little

horses; Miss Candy, single traps; Miss Sahi, liberty ponies; Ramos Trio, hand balancing and posing act; Gomez family hat juggling and bicycle act; Princess Elina, contortion act and Dominics, risley act. Justin Loomis was ringmaster and announcer.

Hendricks Bros. Circus, owned by Bob Childress, opened on March 15 in Florida. It headed North for an early tour of Ohio and Kentucky. The route took the show through all states in the Southeast as well as New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio. There were five three-day stands, 32 two-day stands and 161 one-day stands. The show suffered a blow down in Williamsburg, Kentucky on May 13.

The midway had an elephant ride, a pony ride, a moon bounce and a concession/ticket wagon. The four-center pole blue and white big top was an 80 with one 40 and two 20-foot miles. Three seat wagons and a reserved section was used.

Phil Chandler was ringmaster. The acts included Byron Bowman, dogs, ponies and miniature horse; Miss Elizabeth, web and hula-hoops; Phil Chandler, magic; Jose, rola-bola; Ben Davenport, llama and camel; the Volcano Connection, fire eating; the Ayala family perch pole and aerial cradle; Junior Horsley, barnyard goats and a elephant. Hendricks closed on November 9 in South Carolina.

Jim Judkins' Circus Chimera wintered in Donna, Texas, where the equipment was repainted. The tent truck was rebuilt and a new generator was purchased. Doyle and Donna Milson took over as head booking agents and manned the home office in Hugo, Oklahoma. The

show opened the season in Brownsville, Texas on February 1 and spent about ten days in the Rio Grande Valley. The 150 foot Canobbio big top seating consisted of bleachers general admission and chairs in the reserves. The big top was white on the outside and dark blue inside. The big top lighting was upgraded. A new Titanic Slide was received in Tucson, Arizona early in March.

During the stand in Riverside, California, March 28-30 a new snake show tent, a new horse tent, a new cookhouse tent and bally cloths for the concessions were received. The new canvas came from Tents by Alexis in Dallas.



Hendricks Bros. Circus midway. Doug Edwards photo.

The performance followed its usual format presenting a story line with the acts flowing smoothly from one to another. (1) Wizard with sphere levitation. (2) Appearance of Walter Chimal from an empty Egyptian coffin and Egyptian strap act. (3) Tumbling and teeter board Arabian Nights, Jose, Alex, Donald, Walter, Monica, Miriam, Roberto, Saul and Myrna Chimal. (4) Appearance of Patsy Rosales from empty box and hula-hoops. (5) Clown, Donald Chimal, toilet paper gag. (6) Ariel perch, Sandra and Luis Fernandez.

The Circus Chimera big top and lot. Circus Chimera photo.



(7) rola-bola, Fridman Torales. (8) Scarecrow, Julio Rosales, hat juggling. (9) Perch Pole, Jorge, Julio, Carmen and Patsy Rosales. (10) Clown, Luis Fernandez, popcorn gag. (11) Globe of Death, Donald and Roberto Chimal. 15-minute Intermission (12) Underwater Fantasy, featuring Miriam Chimal, bungee trapeze and Fridman Torales, upside-down walk. (13) Juggling, Alex Chimal assisted by Myrna Chimal. (14) Clown, Luis Fernandez, jumping rope. (15) Head Balancing Trapeze, Romeo, Chimal. (16) Skipping rope, Donald, Alex, Walter, Saul, Romeo, Monica, Miriam and Myrna Chimal, and Luis and Sandra Fernandez. (17) Clown, Donald Chimal, ring toss to audience. (18) Double space wheel, Patsy, Deyanria, Jorge and Julio Rosales. (19) Finale with the Wizard and all cast members.

The Nuns, Dorothy and Bernard joined the show on March 1 in Sierra Vista. Sister Bernard went to work in the wardrobe department, and Sister Dorothy took over the hat and T-shirt stand. In off hours they taught school to the children on the show. By late April Judkins had installed a satellite/internet system.

The California tour ended in Citrus Heights and a 486 mile two day jump took the show to Springfield, Oregon on June 18. Another two-day 325-mile haul took the circus to Kennewick, Washington. The show stayed in Washington until August 8 and the circus went into Idaho for a single stand at Coeur d'Alene on August 12. Then a two and a half day run covering 1,029 miles brought Chimera to Loveland, Colorado on August 14. An extensive Colorado route was played until September 16 when it played Moab, Utah.

In late September Jim Judkins was in away from the show for two weeks working in El Cerrito, California and Las Vegas preparing new press material.

The show finished the season in Texas. A seven-day stand in South Houston was played November 11 to 17. The show closed the season in Brownsville on December 8. Judkins reported that business was good until mid-October when the bottom fell out.

Bentley Bros. Circus opened late in the spring due to a question of the ownership of the equipment. The show played Raynham, Massachusetts August 16-18. Miguel Pages was ringmaster and juggler. The performance included owner Bob (Cowboy) Moyer's four animal acts; Gabriel Castro, clown; Jenny and Marilyn Espana, webs; Chachi Estenan, tight rope; Martin Espana, Jr., space wheel; Espana family Russian swing; Nellie Hanneford, liberty horses and ponies; the Poema family, foot juggling; Joel Faulk, rope spinner; Kelsie Delmonte, hula hoops; clowns Mary and Steve Reichel, Nicholas Soren, juggler; Kimberly Smith, single trapeze; Miguel Fernandez, slack wire; Lynette Delmonte, aerial web and lyre; Curtis Allen, space wheel. It played Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 22-25.

The Culpepper and Merriweather Circus opened on March 17 in Antlers, Oklahoma, after wintering in Hugo, Oklahoma. It played Lonsdale, Minnesota on July 30. The midway sported a Titanic slide, an elephant ride, and a small petting zoo, and a pit show with animals. The show moved on three semis, and a number of fifth-wheelers including the cookhouse.

Natalie Cainan was ringmaster. The acts included Gisella Bautista, hula-hoops and contortion; Susan Annette Vonderheid, Spanish web; Casey Cainan, dog act and two elephants; Freddie Rosales, juggling; Brent DeWitt, clown; Jason Bautista, hand balancing; Tavana Luvas, single trap; and Stephine Darr, Roman rings.

After announcing that the Vidbel's Olde Tyme Circus would no longer tour under canvas, it came out again in 2002.

The show played the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Shrine, April 4-6. And was in Bethlehem, March 15-17. The acts included the Nerveless Nocks, sway poles, space wheel and chair balancing; Satani, fire and swords; Kay Rosaire's



The Culpepper & Merriweather midway in Verona, Wisconsin. Tim Tegge photo.

tigers; Susan Vidbel cloud swing; the Marinoffs, aerial act and Jennifer Smith, cannon act.

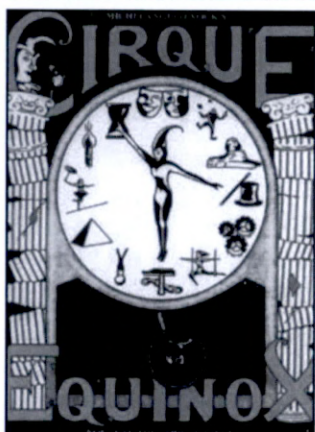
It was in North Andover, Massachusetts on July 24-25. The acts were mostly Vidbel's, including a dog act; a mixed act consisting of one camel, two llamas, four goats, one pony and a Great Dane dog; a liberty act and Susan Vidbel, cloud swing. Other acts were Olga's Geese; the Ashton family risley act; Antonio Olmeda, hand balancing, illusions and hat juggling and the Patricks, rola-bola and juggling. Scott O'Donnell was ringmaster. Wynn Murrah on drums and Oleg Rudnyskiy on keyboard provided the music.

The show traveled on two semis, one carrying the big top, seating and generator, the other carried animals. A box truck with a ticket windows pulled a concession trailer. Vidbel closed in October after playing in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

James Clements' Circus Boreal played only Anchorage, Alaska under a four pole yellow and blue European big top. In 2001 the show played

Vidbel's Olde Tyme Circus in Midland Park, N. J. in June. Paul Gutheil photo.





## 2002 PROGRAMS





The Circus Boreal European big top in Alaska. Circus Boreal photo.

three cities. It was 98.6 feet in diameter with a 12-foot sidewall. The performance included Christna Plunkett, liberty ponies; Fausto Scorpions, risley act; Jim Plunkett, low wire; Una Mimnah, aerial lyra; Kalki, hula-hoops; Giovanni Zoppe, Nino the clown; Star Plunkett, swinging ladder; Christina Plunkett, juggling; Cordalise, aerial number and the Dancing Gauchos.

Tuffy Nicholas' Stars of the World Famous Moscow State Circus opened the season at the Palmetto Arena in Florida early in the year. The show was a cut down version of the three rings presented in 2001. This allowed it to be presented in smaller venues such as high school gyms.

The show headed north, playing Roanoke, Virginia, April 19-21. An extensive New England route was shown in Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire. Marketing used an extensive distribution of free kids tickets. It played Woonsocket, Rhode Island, March 21.

The production values were high, using strobe lights and fog. Croby

Newspaper ad for the Moscow Circus.

**MOSCOW CIRCUS**

Thursday  
November 14, 2002  
7:30 PM • Kuss Auditorium  
Clark State Performing Arts Center  
Russian Folk Festival in our Lobby prior to the show!

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW!**  
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**FAMILY FUN!**

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Esana was ringmaster and announcer. The performance included Simon Arestov, rola-bola; Maritza Domingez, aerial spider lady; the Moroccan Tangier troupe, tumbling and acrobatics; Maritza Domingez, Marilyn Espana and Stephanie Espana, web

number; Ivan Juk, strong man; Espanas, cradle act; Nikolai Koshkqarev and son, hand balancing and contortion and Arestov family, rope jumping.

The show played Huntsville, Alabama, April 16-17, Roanoke, Virginia, April 19-21 and the Erie Pennsylvania Speedway, June 30. For the outdoor tour the show carried 800 chairs and bleachers for 1,000. Four trucks were added to carry the outdoor equipment. In the middle of the summer Nicholas took the show to Alaska. However the building in Anchorage was not available on weekends; the mid week days did not attract very many patrons. Following a layoff the show planned to reopen under a 120 by 165 big top.

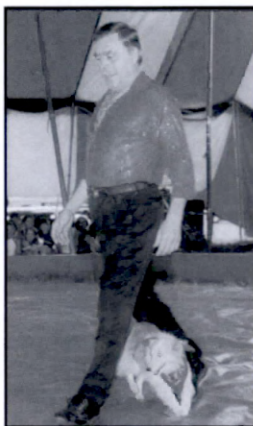
The Alaine Zerbini Circus played the Charlotte County Florida County fair, February 15-24. Melody Castro was ringmaster. The performance included Leticia, Julian and Chris, magic and illusions; Miss Cathy, foot juggling; Damican, unicycles; Renzo Tenzo, clown; Alaine Zerbini, dogs; Stephanie, Spanish web; Yo Ya, hula hoops; Mary Ellen, house cats; Wa Da Du, fire stick; and snakes; and Galarrrto, perch. It played several weeks in June in Wisconsin and played the Franklin County fair in Columbus, Ohio in July.

Gopher Davenport's Starr Bros. Circus played San Antonio, Texas on February 8. The new big top was an 80 with two 20s and a 30 foot middles. The show had two African ele-

phants, cats and a camel. There were no semis; all the trailers were fifth wheelers, not requiring CDL driver's licenses. The acts included the Argentine Gauchos, clowns, perch pole, rola-bola, dogs, and single trapeze. During the season the show played Kansas, Colorado, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. Using the Big Top Circus title, the show played Russell, Kansas on September 20.

On December 6 Ben Davenport, Gopher's son, was killed in a truck accident in South Carolina. He had been with Hendricks Bros. Circus presenting a camel and llama act.

He had just left the Hendricks Bros. Circus winter quarters and was heading for Greenville, South Carolina. His pickup truck went into a spin on an icy road and went left of center striking an oncoming car. Davenport was killed with a broken neck. A Mexican man with him received a broken arm. Upon hearing the news the senior Davenport closed his circus in Louisiana and returned to winter quarters. Starr resumed its tout in the Texas Rio Grande valley. Following the closing of Culpepper & Merriweather their elephants joined the Davenport show.

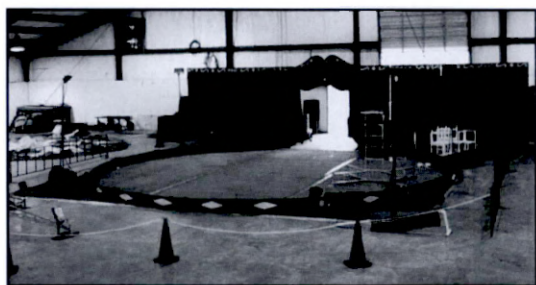


Alaine Zerbini and his dog act. Tim Tegge photo.

Circo Mundial opened in Houston, Texas late in March with a ten-day stand. It next went to El Paso for ten days, and opened in at the Valle Vista Mall in Harlington, Texas on April 26 and played there until May 8. The show used attractive posters that were placed in nearby cities. Kid's tickets were widely distributed. Large newspaper ads and TV and radio spots were used.

Edwin Rivera was manager; Yonkany Casillas, marketing director; Frank Pealer, boss canvasman; Molly Pealer, in charge of office and ticket wagon.

A number of the semi-trailers had been repainted. The same red and yellow big top from prior years was used. The air-conditioned European style top sat around 2,000.



The Royal Palace Circus in Sussex, N. J. Paul Gutheil photo.

The acts included the Mombassa troupe (6), acrobats; a Russian swing; a dog act; Espanas, high wire and Dave Whaley with three Carson & Barnes elephants.

The show closed suddenly in San Antonio following a hit and miss tour and problems in setting a route. The equipment was taken to Miami and was placed on sale.

Tommi Leibel's Liebling Bros. played Lakeland, Florida in March for the Shrine. The acts included a juggler; a dog act; Alex, Spanish web; a snake act; rola-bola; Susan Vidbel, single traps; and a single elephant. The show played Manitowoc, Wisconsin on June 6.

Ivor David Balding's Circus Flora played the St. Louis' Grand Center parking lot, May 24 to June 29. The 2002 production was titled "Gallop." The acts included Giovanni Zoppe, clown; Sacha Pavlata; the Wallendas; Lisa Dufresne, ponies, camels and horses; the Dzhigits, Cossack riders and the St. Louis Arches. The UniverSoul No. 2 show date and dated Flora, June 11-16.

Balding's elephant Flora was not with the show, having been placed in the Miami (Florida) Metrozoo in February 2001. Although docile while with Balding the elephant became unruly and attacked a zoo handler on December 16. During a feeding the next day Flora abruptly pushed Mike Embury to the ground and kicked him fifteen feet knocking him out. Embury had little experience in handling elephants, having only started on the job October 2.

Weller Bros. Circus played an open-air date in Tyler, Texas on June 22. Brian Weller was announcer and presented a llama act. The acts included Luna's dogs and trampoline; Weller brothers, juggling; and liberty donkeys.

Russell Bros. Family Circus, owned by Edward Russell and Stephen Michaels, opened the season May 15-19 at the Glen County fair in Orland, California. They sported a new blue and yellow big top. The show traveled on two trucks and two trailers. The performance included Yahodie and Genie, magic and illusions; Stephen Michaels, juggling and chair balancing and Dr. Doolittle, birds. When the fairs overlap the show also used the Crowell family, trampoline, whips and ropes. Their old big top was sold to the Wiles and Crowell Family Circus.

The Wiles and Crowell Family Circus opened at a fair in Chowchilla, California, May 16-19.

Circus Belle, owned by Lucy Loyal and Lalo Murrillo, returned to the road playing in Texas in October. It played outdoors with in a red and white sidewall and a marquee. Two poles were used for the aerial acts and a pair of uprights was used for a cradle act. An office/concession Wells-Cargo trailer was on the midway.

Lalo Murrillo was announcer and plate spinning. The acts included Miss Cathy, foot juggling; Curiel Kids, trampoline; Tenzo, clown; a Russian strap act; Lucy Loyal with two ponies and five dogs; the Ramos, risley; Yooya Tickolini, hula hoops and house cat act; Curiel sisters, cradle; and Miss Marie, low wire. The show played rodeo arenas, armories and buildings.

The tradition smaller indoor circuses continued to book armories and county fair buildings, most deepened on free kids tickets bringing in their patrons.

Ray MacMahon's Royal American Circus, traveling on five trucks, opened the season on January 18 in Steubenville, Ohio. It carried a light plant and bleachers seating 900 people. A sleeper and cookhouse was provided for the working men.

The performance in-

cluded the Ron Dykes family and the Jose Torres family. The Dykes presented a unicycle routine, a cradle act, and a single trapeze. Jose Torres clowned and juggled, his daughter Manuella did rola-bola, dogs and liberty ponies. MacMahon was ringmaster and Jose Torres was show manager.

It played Cape Girardeau, Missouri on March 27 and East Moline, Illinois, April 19. The petting zoo was returned to the show after being housed at Dave Hale's farm in Cape Girardeau. The animals were a camel, llamas, a zebra, zedonk, a midget horse, a hairy cow, and goats.



A newly painted Pages truck at the opening stand. Ed Smith photo.

The Royal Palace Circus, produced by Stephanie and Harry Dubsky, Jr., presented a strong performance in 2002. The lineup included the Valienca's Gaucho drummers, peacocks, bareback riding and pony review; Latasha Dubsky, Spanish web; Miss Lynn, birds; Miss Sophia, gorilla and snakes; the Frank Galumbos family, aerial routine, rola-bola and Borsh, the clown. The show played Xenia, Ohio on April 28.

Circus Pages opened early in January. The performance included Jorge Pages with two lions, two





Bengal tigers and a white tiger; Collean, web number; Jim Earhart with dogs and juggling; Vincinta with horse and two ponies, Roman rings and big and little horses; Freida with a camel and elephants and the Posso family, wire and risley acts. The show played Marysville, Ohio on April 13. The show played Miami, Oklahoma on March 28 and Lawrence, Kansas on May 26.

A new entry was called Radio Show Time, because it used only radio for advertising. It played Texarkana, Texas on March 16. Its marketing plan did not work and it did not last long.

Circo Astillita opened in June in Nevada and played five dates in buildings and in front of grandstands.

The Macias Circus played Eldorado, California on July 29 and Osage City, August 2. It too was short lived.

The American Crown Circus and Circo Osorio played a long season in Nevada, Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington and Utah.

Still another Moscow circus played San Bernardino, California in a small tent seating about 500 people.

The Sunshine Circus played Livingston, Texas August 26.

A new classification for shows might be called crossovers. These companies that usually played in buildings, but also operated large tented shows in the summer.

Tommy Hanneford has been known for decades as a leading producer of indoor circuses, notably for the Shrine and other charitable organizations. But in recent years the Hanneford organization has become a leader in under canvas presentations. In

2002 the producer fielded five distinctively unique tents, all with comfortable seating ranging from 750 to 2,500 patrons. All but one was European styled. The new Mendoza tent was 100 x 150 feet and seats 1,140. The new Mendoza tent No. 2 is 85 feet in diameter and sat 680. The Canobbio tent is 135 feet in diameter and sat 1,736. The Bedazzled tent is 85 feet in diameter and sat 680. The Adventureland tent is 120 x 170 feet and sat 1,470. This tent is traditional bale ring in design.

On May 31 the smallest Hanneford big top was taken to Naples, Florida for a most unusual engagement. It was contracted by Mrs. Bill Rose of Naples, Florida as a 75th birthday present for her husband. She had contacted John Pugh when the Beatty-Cole show was in Naples the prior fall. Pugh in turn contacted Tommy Hanneford who fulfilled her wishes.

The performance included Mark Karoly, elephants and riding act; the Mongolian Girls, contortion; Jonathan Riquelma, rola-bola on trapeze; Svetlana Shamsheeva, cats and birds; Gisele Requelma, trapeze and hula-hoops and Markova, dogs. As a final treat Mrs. Rose came in the tent on an elephant as Lady Godiva, dressed in a skin tight nude outfit with painted on breasts. The 350 invited guests went wild. The Hanneford concession trailer provided free goodies to all in attendance.

Nellie Hanneford and her 16 horse liberty act at the Westchester County Fair at Yonkers, N.Y. Paul Gutheil photo.



The acts left Naples for Hanneford dates in Columbia, South Carolina; Lansing, Michigan and Miami, Florida. Hanneford had another unit under Billy Martin in Elmira, New York at the same time.

Dick Wilson joined the show as a booking agent. Wilson is the father of ringmaster John Wilson.

Tommy Hanneford again brought his large Canobbio tent to the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee. As a bonus he hired \$12,000 worth of air conditioning equipment for the big top. Features of the performance were the Flying Pages and Nellie Hanneford's large liberty act. CFA members attending the national convention were invited into the center ring when they came to the show.

Royal Hanneford was again a feature of the Eastern States Exposition, September 13-29. Larry Stout was bandmaster. The performance included the Flying Pages; Svetlana Shamsheeva, dog act and cats and birds; Guiming Neng, vase juggling; Cathy Hanneford, liberty act; and the Marinoffs, aerial number.

Trapeze performer Jill Pages was injured during the opening performance of the Hanneford circus at the Eastern States Exposition on September 13. She returned to the show later in the engagement. Hanneford's large Canobbio big top and the Mendoza No. 2 top was used for the Bedazzled magic show were both used at the Big E.

From September 20 to 23 the Hannefords had five units out using four big tops. The Mendoza No. 1 top was used at the Salaam Shrine in Sussex County, New Jersey. Another big top was at Adventureland Park near Des Moines, Iowa. Hanneford also produced the Shrine Circus in



Royal Hanneford at the Morristown, N. J. Shrine in May. Paul Gutheil photo.

Jacksonville, Florida at the same time.

New to the Hanneford organization were a number of indoor dates sponsored by buildings that formerly hosted Ringling-Barnum. In some cases the cities were cut from the Big Show route and in others it switched to newer venues. In the fall a Western and Northern tour took a unit to St. Paul, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; Kennewick, Washington; Bozeman and Billings, Montana; and Casper, Wyoming.

It was in St. Paul at the end of September. Kay Parker and four additional musicians worked the show. John Wilson was ringmaster and the acts included Brian Franzen's tigers and elephants; the Espanas, space wheel, motorcycle globe, cloud wing, head balancing trapeze, Roman rings and aerial Chiffon act; the Adrian Poema family, risley; Garza's statue act; Nellie Hanneford, liberty horses and ponies; the Chicago Boys, tumbling and rope jumping; Iniakis, quick change and hat juggling and the Carillos, high wire.

Chandra, a Hanneford elephant for forty years, died early in September at a farm for retired animals in Georgia. She was originally with Hunt Bros. Circus and had been owned by Tommy and Struppi Hanneford for many years. Gary Allen, long time Hanneford man, left the show while it was in Adventureland. Mark Kar-oly assumed responsibility for the elephants. After the season concluded Karoly took the remaining Hanneford elephants to his quarters in Myakka City,

Florida.

Another large show playing indoors and under canvas was the Tarzan Zerbini Circus. It opened the season in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, January 31 to February 3. The Florida tour ran

from March 22 to 31. It played Denver, Colorado, April 5-7; Ft. Collins, April 9-10; Salina, Kansas April 19-21 and Rockford, Illinois April 25-28. The show played an extensive route of Canadian Shrine dates under canvas.

From May 2 to 20 Zerbini played various Saskatchewan dates. Eastern Canadian stands were from May 24 to September 22. Zerbini played the Windsor, Ontario Shrine May 31 to June 2. The beautiful canvas layout was in front of Casino Windsor.

The performance included Xena and the Cat Dancers; clown Poppy; Cristine Zerbini, hula hoops; Miss Svetlana Gololobova, aerial turns; Anthony Zerbini, elephants; Victoria Duo, double trap act; Fanjos, quick change; Wrika Zerbini, liberty horses; the Murcias, high wire; and Richard Curtis, illusions. Michael DeGirolamo was bandmaster and Larry Solhein was performance director. The Zerbini show played a date in Bermuda, December 18-21.

Sterling & Reid Bros. Circus toured for eleven months. Its indoor

The Tarzan Zerbini big top. Zerbini Circus photo.



season opened in Conroe, Texas, January 3-4. Tyler, Texas followed January 5-6. Dick Garden's operation continued to play in buildings in the winter months and under canvas in the spring, summer and fall, using the same strong performance.

It moved on to Shreveport and Alexandria, Louisiana, Mobile and Birmingham, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia, January 25-27. It was in Rochester, New York on February 12 and Syracuse, February 14-15.

Pat White was new to the show with a Hawthorne seven tiger act; she also worked the show's liberty horses. Jim Zajicek returned with four Hawthorne elephants. Other acts included the Delta troupe, Russian swing; the Mongolian Angles (3) contortion act and trapeze; Dallas Zoppe and Hans Klose, dog act; and chimps; the Zimintov troupe, bouncing bicycle and rope jumping; the Spartans, motorcycle on wire; Jack Cook, comedy car and Luis Munoz, cannon.

The Mongolian contortion act on Sterling & Reid. Sterling & Reid photo.



Late in the summer the Hawthorn elephants and tigers left the show. A group of elephants from Carson & Barnes joined as well

as Yaro Hoffman's tigers.

A new Mendoza purple big top with yellow trim arrived on the show in late September. It was twenty-feet wider and fifty-feet longer. The new tent raised the seating capacity from 2,200 to 3,500. A purple horse top, marquee and cookhouse top were also new. The show played Las Vegas, November 2-3 under the new tent, but rented seven seat trailers. Most of the under canvas equipment and truck were stored during the indoor tour.

After closing the 2002 tour the show wintered at the Beaumont, Texas fairgrounds. During this shut down four new 53 foot semis were decorated. This circus was one of few that did good business in 2002.

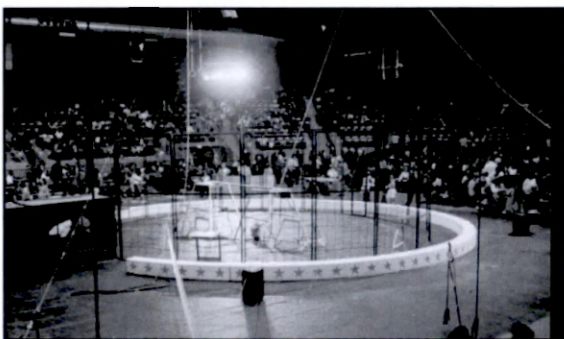
A number of traditional "Shrine



Ian Garden, Jr. with liberty horses in Barre, Ontario. Fred Pfening photo.

Circus" producers again filled the needs of sponsoring organizations playing mostly in arenas and grandstands.

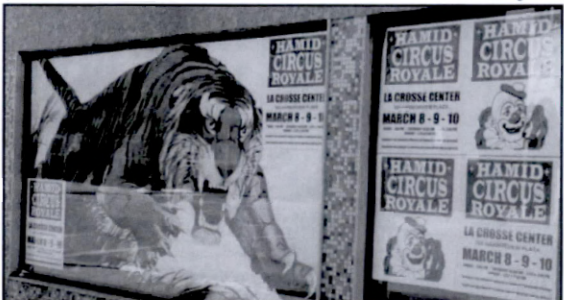
Canada's Garden Bros. Circus opened the season in the Toronto Skydome, March 21-24. Co-owner Ian M. Garden, Jr. was ringmaster and worked the liberty act. The acts



Circus at the Fairgrounds, produced by John McConnell. John Polacsek photo.

included Sean Ives, motorcycle globe; Renaldo, clown; Markova's dog act; the Flying Vargas; Igo and Tatianna, the Tokai troupe and Alex and Company, jugglers; Miss Analia and Miss Korny, hand balancers; Irina's costumed dogs; Zeman Karoly, BMX bike act; the Ariana Duo, Analia and

A rare big billstand stand for Hamid in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Tim Tegge photo.



Anai, silk acts; the Garden Bros. Jumpers; three Carson and Barnes elephants and Brian Miser, cannon. The CHS convention attendees visited the show in Barre,

Ontario on August 24.

John McConnell's Circus Royale played Poughkeepsie, New York, February 22-24; Jackson and Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 8-14; Danbury and Stamford, Connecticut May 13-19. The show played a date on the Michigan State Fair grounds, March 1-10. Rebekah Monroe was ringmaster. The acts included the Flying Lunas; Johnny Peers dogs; the Merchinofs; Luisa and Gabriella Guzman, Roman rings and Trapeze; Doug Terranova, elephants and Uncle Grumpy with his pigs.

It played the Utica, New York Shrine October 3-6. Rebekah Monroe was ringmistress and the clowns were Greg and Karen DeSanto. The performance included the Flying Vargas; Gabriela Guzman, aerial turn and juggling; T. J. Howell, juggling and unicycles; Cousin Grumpy, pig act; Gary Sladek, comedy trampoline; Sanger's dogs; the Hartzells, cross-bow; Bruno Blaszk, tigers; Louis del Moral, Carson & Barnes elephants and Brian Miser's cannon.

Hamid's Circus Royale opened the season in Topeka, Kansas on February 2. It then played Indianapolis, Indiana, February 28 to March 3; LaCrosse, Wisconsin, March 8-10; Hamburg, New York, March 21-24; Kingsport, Pennsylvania, April 1-6; Columbus, Ohio, April 2-7 and St. Paul, Minnesota, April 4-7. The LaCrosse date was a near wash-out due to snow.

The acts included Tim Tegge, clown; Maritza, Roman rings, Hawthorn elephants; Pat White with a Hawthorn tiger act; the Poliniks, dogs;

Steele's bears; the Rolling Diamonds (Hansens); and Don Otto, comedy diving and trampoline. When it played LaCrosse, Wisconsin the first week of March, the acts included the Geraldo Family, high wire; Bruno Blaszk, tigers; Cortez family, cradle acts and flying trapeze and Geraldos, motorcycle globe. The Hamid show used live music.

Hamid contracted Garden Bros. Circus to play the St. Paul Shrine circus, April 4-7. Eric McConnell handled the box office management. George Hamid, Jr. was on hand to welcome the crowd. Ian Garden, Jr., the ringmaster, came into the arena on a motorcycle to start the show. Among the acts were Renaldo, clown; John Campolongo, tigers; the Flying Vargas; the Garden liberty horses; Louie Del Moral, three Carson & Barnes elephants and Brian Miser, cannon. This was the only date played by Garden in the United States.

George Cardin's Circus International was one of the largest sponsored circuses on tour. A twenty-acre winter quarters was maintained near Springfield, Missouri. Cardin reportedly owned eleven elephants and twenty-seven motorized units.

The show played Terrell, Texas on January 22. The performance was presented in front of a red, white and blue backdrop. The music was taped.



The George Cardin elephants. Mike Chist photo.

The announcer was Devon Chandler. Bobby Gibbs reported these acts: three rings of hula hoops and juggling; Larry Allen Dean and the Clyde Bros. tigers; two Russian strap acts; David Rosaire's dogs and monkeys; three rings of swords and hand balancing; Bungee aerial acrobats and Doug Terranova's three elephants.

For its first time in Virginia, the circus played the Roanoke Shrine, opening on February 1. The Cardin Circus played the Madison, Wisconsin Shrine, February 15-17. The acts included Jimmy Hall and the Castle bears; the Tristan troupe, twin wires; Susan Lacey with 13 Hawthorn tigers and Joe Bauer's space wheel.

Cardin played a series of Shrine dates in Illinois from June 1 to 9. Charles Amaral, Jr. was ringmaster and presented a magic act. The acts included the Winns, aerial motorcycle, sway poles and space wheel; Derrck Rosaire IV, bears; Fornasan and Toscano Duos, aerial turns; Jorge Rossell, comedy car; the Flying Salazaes; Lou Rossell, uncaged leopards; the Toscanos, high wire; Fornasaris, bicycle act; Jany Salazar, hula hoops; George Cardin, elephants and Robin Valencia, Dave Smith cannon.

The Minneapolis Shrine was played, October 17-30. The performance included the Flying Condors; Shane Johnson's cats; the Espanas, trapeze, motorcycle on wire and sky wheel; Rosaire-Zoppe chimps; Fornasari's, unicycles and Dave Smith, cannon.

Jody Jordan's Jordan World Circus Eastern unit played the Flint, Michigan Shrine show January 12-20. The unit played Cincinnati, Ohio, March 7-10 for the Shrine. From May 4 to 8 the Jordan unit played stands in Kentucky, including Lexington May 10-12.

Billy Barton was performance director. David Mass was ringmaster. The performance included Shane Johnson, tigers; the flying Redpaths; Justino Zoppe, juggling; motorcycle globe; Natalia on lyra and four web girls; Susan Sheryll, dogs; David Daniel, high dive to air bag; Daniela, hula hoops; Raphaela, Louis and Riana, foot juggling; the Winns, sway pole; David and Dania, quick change; Rapheala, Roman rings; Miss April, cloud swing; Davide Zoppe, monkeys; Dalton and Louise, rola-bola and the Barreda-Jacobs elephants. The show played Canton, Ohio, March 22-24. The Western unit played Puyallup, Washington, March 8-10.

Serge Coronas played the Houston Shrine date in April. The perform-

ance included Miss Debbie, slide for life; Hoffman's tigers; Mike Winn, space wheel; Ross and Lisa Hartwell, cross bow; the Sky Masters, sway pole and motorcycle globe; the Flying Perez; and Doug Terrinova's elephants.

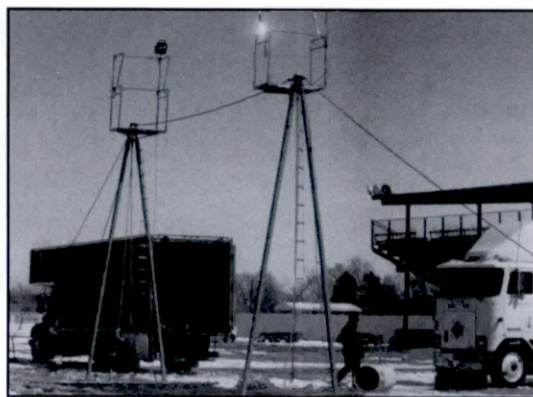
In April it played the Corpus Christi, Texas Buccaneer Days. Serge Coronas, Jr. was ringmaster. The show had a petting zoo that including three giraffes, zebras, camels, llamas, and goats.

It played Macon, Georgia, September 6-7; Columbus, Georgia, September 13-14 and Kansas City, Missouri November 7-10. The Jacobs-Barreda elephants played these dates.

Ray Valentine's Mighty American Circus played Norfolk, Nebraska in March. It traveled on a single large fifth wheel trailer. The show played outdoors at the Mississippi Valley fair grounds in Davenport, Iowa, April 13-14. Anthony Murray was ringmaster. The performance included Rosa Rosales, single trap and cradle; Rosales family, high wire; John and Christina Dubsky, dogs, cats and doves; Anthony Murray, sword basket and comedy magic; Buffalo Barney, comedy horse; Eddie Steeples and Billie Joe the chimp and bears; clown Jules Vaughn; James Dubsky, comedy music; the Rosales family, high wire; the Portugal Duo, cradle; Miss Arabella, chair suspension; Loter's, liberty horses and Martin Guerrero, space wheel.

Circus Valentine played Fairbury, Nebraska on March 26 in the snow. The high acts were presented outdoors; the rest of the performance was given in a building.

The show played Terrell, Texas on May 17 and Ruston, Louisiana late in May. Valentine played Beaumont, Texas on September 13. Wayne McCary's Maine dates opened in Manchester, New Hampshire on April 4-7. The performance included Nadia Belanko, aerial lyre; Svetlana Shamsheeba, doves and house cats; Victory, contortionist; Rubys, double traps; Alesia and Freind, comedy cycle act; Rosaire's dogs; David and Dania, quick change; Dania Kaseeva, hula hoops; Carrillos, high wire; and



Circus Valentine in the snow on March 26 in Fairbury, Nebraska. Ron Sanford photo.

the Morris family elephants. Charley Van Buskert was ringmaster.

Paul Kaye's Circus America again produced the Hadi Shrine Circus in Evansville, Indiana, November 28 to December 1. Tommy Baker was ringmaster and Clement Toca was bandmaster. The acts included Crystyne and Wendy, Roman rings; Kim and Tracy, trapeze; April and Jennifer, cloud swing; Gail and Linda, loops; Angel, Tracey, Michele and Samatha, lyres; twelve Hawthorne tigers, presented by Wade Burke; The Ruby Duo, double trapeze; Joanne's poodles; Kneisley's dogs; Trudy's dogs; Tina and John Winn and Nicholas and Peter Winn, twin incline wire motorcycles; Olmeda's Spanish horses in three rings; aerial display with 18 girls, San Juan Duo, Valla Duo and Didier Duo, aerial adagios; Castle's bears; Zoppe-Rosaire, chimpanzees; Derrick Rosaire's bears; Princess Tavana, slide for life; Trio Bertini, unicycles; Dieter Galambos, chair balancing; Duo Esqueds, juggling; Winn's space wheel; the Flying Vargas, trapeze; Hawthorne elephants; Barreda elephants; Carrillos, high wire; the Kenya Wizards, acrobats; and Winn's aerial motorcycle act. The Evansville date was by far the strongest Shrine performance of the season.

Frank Curry again presented his Ronald McDonald Circus in Nashville, Tennessee February 14-17.

James and Christine Plunkett's James Christy Cole Circus produced the Monroe, Louisiana Shrine show, March 22-24. The bandleader was John Malett. Christine Herriott

Plunkett was ringmaster. The performance included Doug Terranova, tigers and elephants; Christopher James (Jim Plunkett), low wire; Star Christy, ladder act; Eden Dinira, Spider Woman; Jeffrey Plunkett, comedy car; Nina and Nickolai. Quick

change act; Urias troupe, motorcycle globe and the Flying Lunas. Plunkett Bros. Circus played Lincoln, Nebraska, March 11-17 and Omaha, April 8-14.

It played the Shreveport, Louisiana Shrine, May 10-12 under a red and white-stripped big top. Among the acts were Dalton and Louise, rola-bola; the Winns, aerial motorcycle with trapeze and on incline wire and the Wheels of Freestyle, bicycle tricks. A number of Shrine dates were played in Nebraska. Fairbury was shown on May 28. In July the Plunketts were in Alaska with Circus Boreal.

Circus Gatti played Bremerton, Washington on July 20. The performance included John Pelton's elephants, Shane Johnson's cats and the Kosan riding act.

George Hubler's International Circus played nine dates in 2002. The season opened on March 23 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Other dates were Kansas City, Missouri; Cumberland, Maryland; Canfield, Ohio; Holland, Michigan; LaPorte, Indiana; Burton, Ohio; Newark, Delaware; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The line up of acts at Canfield, Ohio May 9-11 included the Winns, aerial motorcycle, space wheel; Kay Rosaire's tigers; the Perez troupe, trampoline; Lucky Brothers, comedy acrobatics; Silly Sladek, trampoline; Jennifer Vidbel, liberty ponies; Vladimar, high wire; Cuzin Grumpy's, pigs; Mario Zerbini, motorcycle globe; Gary the Great, chair balancing; Mighty Mario, sword walking; the Incredible Hans; Johnny Peers, dogs; the Flying Trasancos; Frank Murray's elephants and Dave Smith, Jr., cannon. Rebekah Monroe was ringmaster. Hubler also handled the concessions at the Columbus Shrine and Dayton Shrine shows.

Mexican shows continued to find the United States fertile territory for their offerings.



Circus Vazquez in Atlanta, Georgia. Joe Bradbury photo.

Circus Vazquez played Oakland, California, April 11-14, under a new white two pole big top. There was also an animal tent and a concession top. It played Dallas, Texas early in June. Bobby Gibbs said: "This is one of the best shows I have seen all spring. The Vazquez family has a real success on their hands. Tent is beautiful, European-style seating, concession tent and menagerie tent out front. Nice clean red and white interior big top, great lighting system. The show was announced in Spanish and English."

Vincent Von Duke's cat act had 8 lions, 6 tigers, 2 white tiger cubs and a Shire stallion. Other acts included Pierre Splendal with three Tarzan Zerbini elephants; Carlos Pedro, big and little horse act; Luis Campa, juggling; boxing kangaroos; a Chinese troupe on upright poles and boomerangs and the Geraldo family, high wire and motorcycle globe.

The show played Atlanta in July; Chicago, Illinois September 7-17; Miami, Florida October 11-22; Tampa, Florida October 25 to November 5; Orlando, Florida, November 8-21. It wintered in Donna, Texas.

Circo Garcia played played Ft. Worth, Texas.

Circo Caballero played Tucson, Arizona, April 30 to May 14 and Oakland, California, May 30 to June 4. It was in Texas in September. The big top seated 2,000. Chilendrina, a Mexican television star, was featured. The single ring was four feet from the ground.

Nanny Alarcon was announcer. The acts included the Torreblanca Duo, roller skating team; a motorcycle globe; a double trapeze; the Dorrels, dog

act; Adam Alegria, balancing trapeze; Gauchos; a tetterboard act; and trampoline. The second half was all Chilendrina. When the show played North Las Vegas at the end of the year it had to leave the animals acts out of the performance due to local restrictions of animal acts.

A unit of Circo Atayde crossed the boarder to play the Oil Palace in Tyler, Texas, June 20-23. A four-piece band augmented taped music. Roberto Espana was performance director and Ana Maria was singing ringmistress. The one ring show was presented in Spanish. The acts included a motorcycle on a platform; Omeda brothers, juggling and horses; Borgea Duo, cradle; Gisely, single trap; Visal troupe, Russian swing; Espanas flying act; Jonathon, rola bola and hand balancing and a motorcycle globe act. The show played Odessa, Texas, October 24 using the big top from Circo Mundial.

Other circuses of various sizes and length of season appeared on the scene in 2002.

Circus Sarasota opened its fourth season on February 1 and continued until March 3. The performance included Lisa Dufresne, equestrian; Juan Del La Sierra, flamenco dancer; the Flying Vargas; Dieter Tasso, juggler; Greg and Karen DeSantos, clowns; Renaldo, clown; Dolly Jacobs and Yuri Ryjkov, aerial number; Vladimur Malachikin, contortion and hand balancing; Tino Cristiani, trampoline; Jose Olate, dogs; and Vince Bruce, ropes and whips. George Cahill was ringmaster. Pedro Reis and Dolly Jacobs were the producers.

Early in March the show's equipment was offered for sale. Included were the European 125 foot big top; a 40 x 60 foot tent; a 40 foot round top; bucket seating; ring curb; ring boxes; ring chairs; entrance carpet, fencing. Electrical system and six 40-foot containers. The price was \$100,000.

On March 13 Reis announced that the tent

**BOLETO DE NIÑO GRATIS**  
En La Compra De Un Adulto.  
Menores de 10 Años Solamente.  
Valido Lunes a Viernes. No Valido Sabado y Domingo.  
CABALLERO PRODUCTIONS INC.  
PRESENTA  
**CIRCO CABALLERO**  
CIRCO CABALLERO  
EN VIVO  
CIRCO CABALLERO  
LA CHILINDRINA  
MILLENNIUM  
LA ORIGINAL CHILINDRINA GARANTIZADO  
**DEL 3 AL 14 DE MAYO**  
TUCSON - SOUTHGATE  
SHOPPING CENTER  
3356 6th Avenue  
HOME OF THE NEW TUCSON MARKETPLACE  
LUNES A VIERNES: 7:30 PM  
SABADO Y DOMINGO: 5:30 Y 7:30 PM  
MAS INFORMACION: 884-1558

and equipment had been sold to Tito Gaona for his Flying Trapeze Academy. Pedro Reis became an American citizen on February 12.

The Circus Smirkus summer schedule opened in Greensboro, Vermont on June 30, followed by Stowe; Burlington; Manchester; Saratoga Springs, New York; Putney, Vermont; Simsbury, Connecticut; Newport, Rhode Island; West Tisbury, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts; Sandwich, Milford, New Hampshire; Hamilton, Massachusetts; York, Maine; North Conway, New Hampshire; Lebanon, Montpelier, Vermont and finishing again in Greensboro, Vermont on August 23. The 2002 production was called *Legends of the Wild West*.

The Zoppe Family Circus closed its season on September 28 in Purchase, New York at the New York State University Performing Arts Center. The company of fourteen performed in a 60 by 90 foot 500 seat tent.

The eldest member of the cast was 81 year old Albert Zoppe. His son Giovanni, was producer and appeared as Nino the clown. He also did bareback riding, juggling, trapeze and wire walking. Marc Hofrichter was ringmaster. Others in the performance were Tosca Zoppe, bareback riding; Carla Zoppe, rider; Rudy Heinen, trained dogs; and Bersnak Archacow, Cossack riding.

The show played towns in Connecticut, Vermont and New York, usually under sponsorship with tickets ranging from \$15 to \$20.

Arthur Duchek's King Arthur's Circus played the Yorktown Heights, New York fair in September.

Gary Nelson, an Atlanta, Georgia promoter, tried again in 2002 to open his Afro-Centric Circus in Newport News, Virginia in June. The first performance was cancelled when so few people showed up.

The June 24 Newport News *Daily Press* reported: "The International Afro-Centric Circus opened here last week, but no one went."

"Well, not exactly no one—some people did show up for the premiere, but so few that



The Zoppe Family Circus big top. Zoppe photo.

promoter Gary Nelson of Atlanta refused to say how many. It was few enough that Nelson never did open.

"He planned to have his first show Friday night under a tent at 39th Street and Marshall Avenue, but he postponed it because so few people came. It was worse Saturday afternoon. As he sat in a trailer on the site and contemplated his lack of business, Nelson said he had been expecting crowds.

"We did radio advertising. I put out fliers. We did public-service announcements. I contacted all the top churches in the city." He said. "I talked to the ministers. Even the ministers with free tickets didn't come out. I don't understand it."

"Of course, it was his problem, too—because, he said, he put \$14,000 into the circus.

"We have a good show. We have 28 talents and Lil Pee Wee—he's the 4 year old star of the show," he said. On fliers, the child was described as an acrobatic genius."

Nelson stated he planned to rework the show and open in a couple of months. He rented a lot in Harlem, New York in the fall and sold tickets, but failed to show.

The Make-A-Circus played the San Francisco, California area, July 23-28.

The Showfolks of Sarasota Circus played Robard's Arena on December 14. It was produced by Sam Smith. Justin Loomis was ringmaster and Charles Schlarbaum was musical director.

The acts included Clayton Rosaire, lions; the Moroccan Connection, tumbling; Nina

Migley and Mona Loyal, chiffon strap acts; Jason Walker and the Rebkovets, juggling; the Rosaire-Zoppe chimps; The Aregos, perch act; Bella Tabak, ponies; Korchi's BMX bike act; Werner and Aura Guerros, high wire; Gomez dog act; Smiley Daily's comedy car; Derrick Rosaire's bears; Miss Elaina, contortionist and Murray's elephants.

George and Vickie Hanneford Family Circus continued its long association with the Swap Shop in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, again featuring daughter Cathy with her liberty horses and George Jr. with elephants. Mark David's single trapeze was in the show in winter months.

Billy Martin's Cole All-Star Circus played Port Byron, New York on January 26. Paul Parsons was manager and John Kane was announcer and performance director. Martin was away working Hanneford dates.

The show played Hamburg, New York on March 20. The acts include Brett Marshall's BMX bicycle act; Alan Esqueda, juggler; John "Eggroll" Kane, clown; Benny Fornasari, comedy car and music routine; Monica Marquez, hair gang; and the Goetches, whips and ropes.

The Birchfield and Sons Family Circus played its usual stand in Kissimmee, Florida for the Jaycees January 12. The acts included Johnny Peers, dogs; Shane and Alecia Hansen's cloud swing, juggling and roller skating acts, Jay Ruffy, knife and archery acts, and John Hartley, strong man. This was the 20th consecutive year for the Bill Birchfield Kissimmee show.

The Hansen Spectacular appeared at the Cumberland, Maine fair September 22-28. The acts included the Flying Redpaths; and the various Hansen acts.

Jorge Barreda again produced the Mississippi State Fair Circus, October 2-13. The acts included the Winn family trapeze, sway poles and hula hoops; Tahar's alligators; the Dancing Gauchos and the Barreda elephants.

The Jose Cole Circus toured for 14 weeks of one day stands in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and South and North Dakota.

The Starr Family Circus, owned by Oscar Garcia, played Murray,



Kentucky on February 25. It was set up in an armory, using a blue and yellow backdrop. There were bleachers and chairs.

The acts included Matt Martinez, rola bola; Abadia Trio, acrobatics; a juggler; Cathy Garcia, dogs; Martinez, trampoline and boxing kangaroo; hair hang; Queen Garcia, hula hoops and a contortion act. The show played the Schnecksville Community Fair June 17-22.

Swan Bros. Circus played Healdsburg, California, May 23-25.

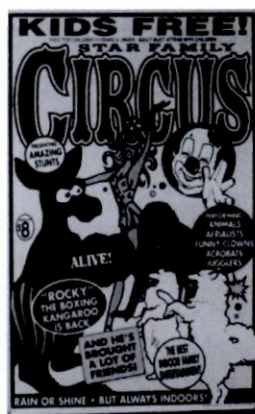
The San Diego based Fern Street Circus played Anaheim's Person Park Outdoor Amphitheatre on June 21. The show was produced by John Highkin and Laura Stansell. Included in performance were Bobby Hartman, juggler; the Golden Hills tumblers; Fletcher Runyan, low wire and trampolines; and Colombina, comedy traps.

Bill Carpenter's Back Yard Circus operated as many as ten units at fairs during the season. Carpenter himself appeared at the Canadian National Exposition. The unusual presentation drew children from the audience, placed them in costumes, and had them play the roles of circus performers. John Kane took a unit to the Circus World Museum in August.

The American All Star Circus, owned by Brent Webb, played Jacksonville, Texas on January 13. It traveled on three large straight trucks carrying ring curb, backdrops and stringer and jack seating. The performance was mainly the Valencia family. Webb handled the announcing and presented illusions. The cast included Julia, dog act; Miss Aurora, globe and sword balancing; Paula, bird act; clown Nachi; Enrique, rola bola; Chief Giovanni, comedy plate spinning.

The Canfield Family Circus played San Francisco, March 9-10 and Santa Rosa, June 1-2.

The Zamperla family played the Florida State fair in Tampa early in February. On February 9 Ernes Zamperla, human cannonball, was injured when he over shot an air bag by 25 feet. Family members exam-



ined the cannon and could not determine what the problem. After again checking the cannon brother Atos made the jump with no problem and continued through the rest of the fair on February 18.

Circus Continental, produced by Klein's Attractions, played the Scioto County Fair in Lucasville, Ohio on August 8. Rick Allen was ringmaster and Tony Pushca had the band. The acts included Ervin Hall's baboons; Don and Dianne Bridwell, clowns; Andy Martella, juggling and plate spinning; the Dancing Gauchos; Urias Duo, aerial cradle and motorcycle globe; the Bill Morris elephants.

Bill Hall's Entertainment and Events Company opened its Holiday Review in Norristown, Pennsylvania



Bill Carpenter's Back Yard Circus at the Meadowlands Fair. Paul Gutheil photo.

on November 29. The tour closed in Allentown, Pennsylvania on December 22. The performance included a number of people from the Vidbel show, including Scott O'Donnell, Jennifer Vidbel, Oleg Rudnytskyi, Susan Vidbel, Eric Adams and Tahar.

For the first time in its seven-year history the Bindlestiff Family Circus spent the majority of the year in New York City where it produced their largest stage show to date. In January Bindlestiff premiered Buckaroo Bindlestiff's Wild West Gender Bender Jamboree at

the Present Company Theatorium, an off-Broadway theater located on the Lower East Side of New York City. In March the show moved to the Mazer Theater, located on the edge of Chinatown. A total of 53 performances were given at the two theaters,

The Bindlestiff Family Circus opened the Palace of Variety and Free Museum near New York City's Times Square on August 1. The museum focused on the history of Times Square showing the evolution of the entertainment mecca. The Palace of Variety was an intimate theater devoted to the preservation and evolution of variety entertainment, open seven nights a week. The performance included aerial acts, magic, music, sword swallowing, jugglers, clowns, comedy and dance. One hundred and ten shows featured 74 variety acts before closing on January 31, 2003. The Palace also hosted 33 productions including novelty music nights, a flea circus, lectures, daytime children's programs, a weekly open mike night and a puppet theater.

The museum was presented with the help of the New York Historical Society, the Museum of the City of New York and the New

York Public Library. The Bindlestiff adult show was shown on Home Box Office in July. It had been filmed a couple of years ago in New Orleans. The troupe gave its PG version at the CFA convention in Milwaukee in July.

The Bindlestiff Palace of Variety in Times Square. Paul Gutheil photo.



Mike Naughton's Yankee Doodle Circus played its usual route of New York, New Jersey and New England dates. It was in Lyndhurst, New Jersey in March.

The Circus Center in San Francisco, California presented the New Pickle Circus holiday show, titled "Circumstance." Performances were given at the Cowell Theater in San Francisco December 18 to January 1. Gypsy Snider directed the show.

Mina was ringmaster and the acts included Joel, clown and chair balancing; Ena and Danny, trapeze duo; Jonas, German wheel; Krin, aerial fabric act; Cory, hand balancing; Olga, aerialist, gymnast and acrobat and Josh, acrobat and juggler. A live band provided the music.

The Circus Center in San Francisco appointed Dominique Jando as associate artistic director on October 15. He was also appointed director of the San Francisco School of Circus Arts.

Montreal, Canada, long time home of Cirque du Soleil, fancied itself as the birthplace of the new wave animalless circus. Soleil's nineteen-year success inspired a number of imitators.

The Quebec government got on the bandwagon, anxious to make the Province an international circus capital. The result was the creation of a number of Soleil look-a-likes. Eloize, Eos, Cheval and Element all opened to local rave reviews. Some survived, others did not. The majority of performers in these shows were graduates of L'Ecole de Cirque (the Quebec Circus School).

Circus Eloize, a Montreal Soliel-inspired show, played indoor venues. It presented two shows in 2002.

The entrance to Cirque Eos. Ralph Rogers photo.



A double trap act on Cirque Eloize. Internet photo.

Nomada and Circus Orchestra. The latter show played Lincoln Center in New York City in February. It played Park City, Utah, September 11-12; Berkeley, California, September 25-29; San Luis Obispo California, October 8; Prescott, Arizona, October 30; Opelika, Florida, November 5; Birmingham, Alabama, November 9; Clearwater, Florida, November 14; Melbourne, Florida, November 15; Lakeland, Florida, November 17; Naples, Florida, November 19 and Amherst, Massachusetts, December 7.

Jeannot Painchaud was artistic director and Christine Rossignol was director. The show's web site said the performance presented the poetry of circus and the magic of orchestra combined.

The acts included Chiasson, silk aerial act; Antoine Carabinier, German wheel and Genevieve Lemay, Roman rings and foot juggling and Suzanne Dolar, single trapeze. The show was successful and is touring in 2003.

The June 28, 2002 *Journal de Montreal* in a review of the show said: "No big top here. Cirque Eloize literally invites you to the theatre, takes you into a dream world where sensuality, tenderness, humor and yes, emotion blend perfectly naturally with acrobats, daring and surprises.

"The clowns set the tone when the curtain goes up.

Sophia, this entire show is for you: as for all the rest of you. Good evening.

"There's hand balancing, juggling, the trapeze, high wire, unicycle—a variety of traditional circus acts are on the menu. Add to this a few novelities, especially the acrobat hanging from straps, the amorous sensual waltz of the hoops and a torrid finale of hand balancing under a fine drizzle and it all adds up to an original and diversified show."

Cheval Theatre, the Montreal-based horse show that appeared in Las Vegas late in 2001, played Costa Mesa, California, March 20 to April 21. It opened in San Jose on May 1. The show was the brainchild of Gilles Ste-Croix, a long-time associate and co-founder of Cirque du Soleil.

The performance was presented in a European style big top seating 1,500 decorated to make it look like a castle. It featured 30 horses of different breeds as well as acrobats, dancers and musicians. The main entrance led to a large stable tent on the way to the big top. The acts included Russian Cossack riders; the Zamperla-Zoppe bareback riders, featuring a somersault from horse to horse; Caroline Williams, liberty horses; Bohemio, clown; Sebastien Desenne and Marion Duterte, valting riders, a dressage act and horse riding jugglers. An eight-person orchestra provided the music. A beautiful full color souvenir program was sold. The show played St. Paul, Minnesota, June 20 to July 6 and Nashville, Tennessee in September.

Cheval Theatre's had a start up cost of \$10,000,000 Canadian. Twenty percent of the funds came from provincial and federal governments. It aborted its tour on short notice.

The Eos big top with air conditioning unit in San Diego. Ralph Rogers photo.



when it ran out of cash. Gilles Ste-Croix went back to work for Cirque du Soleil.

Cirque Eos, another Soleil look-a-like, opened in Montreal on July 17. To launch its North American tour the show received financial support from the Industrial Alliance, Insurance and Financial Services in the amount of one million dollars Canadian. In addition \$800,000 Canadian was received from Fonds d'investissements.

It opened a west coast tour in September under a big top seating 1,400. Following stands in Montreal and Vancouver. The show played San Diego, October 24 to November 10 in Balboa Park. Cirque Eloize day and dated Eos for three days in San Diego. Adding to the situation the Moscow Ballet was in San Diego.

Michel Rousseau started Eos. Alain Benoit, a former Soleil juggler, was vice president and was artistic director. The acts included Marco Dieckmann, juggling; acrobats, trapeze performers; MBX bikes and strap acts.

An article appeared in the San Diego *Union Tribune* on October 24. It stated: "Don't make the mistake of dismissing Cirque Eos as a Cirque du Soleil-want-a-be. Eros was formed in 1998 and possesses many of the same elements that spawned Cirque du Soleil's international success.

"With the exception of two Ukrainians and a young German juggler, the troupe consists of 20 French-Canadians performers, all skilled in multiple disciplines. The costumes are creative, the skits are ethereal yet easy to comprehend, and there are no animals involved."

Business did not go well for the Quebec Eos show. It was to open in Los Angeles on December 4 and in Costa Mesa on February 13, 2003. But that part of the tour was cancelled. On November 20 the show's board of directors in Quebec City decided to close its North American tour, "saying our tour has not been as financially successful as we had hoped." They said the show was well liked, but conditions in the North American market changed remarkably fast.

All the equipment was returned to Canada. The Board stated they were



The Cheval ticket trailer in Nashville, Tennessee. Dave Price photo.

no longer certain that it was feasible to produce their own show under a big top. The show accumulated nearly three million in debts. The operation filed for protection under the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

Theatre Zingaro, the Paris, France based horse show appeared in Costa Mesa, California, October 12 to November 8. This edition was called Triptyk and was directed by Bartabas. In addition to horses the seven Dravidian dancers appeared. One number was titled "Symphony of Psalms." It opened in a thick fog with six women riding white horses. During the act Tissot twisted and turned on a wire above the stage.

The show appeared in New York City in 1996 and 1999, but this was the first appearance in California. The organization flew 30 people and 23 horses directly to Los Angeles from Paris. It returned to France after the one engagement.

The New Shanghai Circus played a

Acrobats in the New Shanghai Circus. Internet photo.



six weeks engagement at the Victory Theater in New York City in the fall. The troupe performed plate spinning, contortion, vaulting, juggling, roller skating on tables, arrow shooting while hanging upside down, unicycling, magic and acrobatics.

Circus Imaginque played Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia, June 15 to August 23. The French-style circus included trapeze, mimes, magicians, jugglers and dancers along with an ensemble of gymnasts on a large acrobatic swing in its thirty-minute show.

Other New Wave want-a-bes were part of the 2002 American circus scene.

Michelangelo Nock with the Nerveless Nocks' presented four units in 2002, Nerveless Nocks Thrill and Stunt Show, Nock Circus, the Clown Kingdom and Cirque Equinox.

Cirque Equinox, the "Nouveau Theatrical Circus," advertised itself as "the dream reality" combined to "present the oldest and most respected circus dynasties in history with a Broadway theatrical flair." The performance ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours in length. The show featured web, chair balancing, tight wire, dancing and other traditional circus acts. Cirque Equinox played the Central Canada Exhibition in Ottawa, August 15 to 25.

The Wonderbolt Circus, headquartered in St. Johns, Newfoundland, played dates in Canada in February. Beni Malone was artistic director. The performance followed a storyline. Pete Soucy, as the Father, wove the acts together.

Circo Zero debuted in San Francisco, California on June 6. It was produced by Keith Hennessy. The performance included tumbling, swinging hoop, trampoline, contortion, cloud swing and chiffon strap act.

Canada had more circus schools than the United States. The largest and oldest was the National Circus School (Ecole Nationale de Cirque) in Montreal. The Toronto School of Circus Arts expanded its operations. In Vancouver CirKids offered a four times a week training for youngsters.

The Sarasota Sailor Circus was presented on March 27-30 and April 3-6. There were 92 young performers in the show. Joe Hart had a 35-person band of students and adults playing the show. The acts included tumbling; Adagio; aerial loops; cloud swing; swinging trapeze; skates and bicycles acts; hand balancing

The Wenatchee Youth Circus, performed under the Circus Chimera big top, July 3-4 in Wenatchee. The youth circus completed its 50th season in 2002.

Circus Minimus opened the season in Boston, Massachusetts on January 19, and played dates in New England and New York, closing the winter tour in Poughkeepsie, New York on March 14. The summer tour opened on July 8 at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center. It closed the season on August 23 in Bennington, Vermont.

The Circus Day Foundation in St. Louis offered a series of three workshops in May. A group from the organization presented shows at the St. Louis City Museum.

Two aerial workshops were held by Gemini Trapeze and Peter Gold in Brattleboro, Vermont, July 22-26 and August 19-23.

The Berkshire Community College presented its Berkshire Children's Circus, August 16-17 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Sixty-two children, 8 to 14 years of age, presented tumbling, juggling, unicycles, bikes, web and trapeze. Carlo and Orlene were artistic directors.

The Great All American Youth Circus aka the Great Redlands "Y" Circus had been in business since 1929. Its season started in September, with 260 performers. The acts included a ribbon strap act; Spanish webs; swinging ladders; aerial Lyras; a high wire act; single traps; juggling and hand balancing. Pete Wray was director.

The New Orleans School of Circus Acts, founded in June 2000, moved its programs to the Lee Circle YMCA in New Orleans. Students appeared at the Louisiana Children's Museum and at New Orleans Public Libraries.

Circus Amok, part of the New York City school system, opened its 2002 tour, June 4-9 in Central Park, west



The Great Circus Train on the way to Milwaukee. Jerry Cash photo.

of 65th Street. It then played Columbus Circle, June 12-16, Tompkins Square Park, June 15, Socrates Sculpture Park on Long Island June 21, UCC Community Garden, East New York, June 22 and Bryant Park June 23.

The circus museums continued their activities in 2002.

After a nationwide search, the Circus World Museum Board of Directors named Lawrence A. Fisher its new President and Chief Executive Officer. Fisher joined Circus World from the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he served as

CWM clowns Greg and Karen DeSanto. Paul Gutheil photo.



president.

The museum opened two areas never before open to the public and offered expert advice to guests as part of National Historic Preservation Week. In the baggage horse barn guests received a first hand look at how the Ringlings used the buildings and they toured the artifact collections department. They also learned preservation techniques and how to explore the library to learn about everything from genealogy to musicology. As part of this program Baraboo fourth graders were invited to the baggage horse barn to learn about the history of their town.



The Chinese Imperial Circus and Clown-O-Rama shows at the fairgrounds in Milwaukee. Arnold Brito photo.

The education initiative at Circus World continued with a pilot program that will be called KidsWorld Circus in 2003. This interactive program allows elementary school students the chance to become performers themselves.

The performance included singing ringmaster David SaLoutos; clowns Greg and Karen DeSanto; the Ramos Family's Risley act, Micah William's camels; Nellie the elephant; the graceful Juliet Parkinson; Father and Son Jordan and Nasko Balaktchiev's hand-balancing; the Carrillos thrilling high wire act, and Larry Stout's circus band.

The Razzle Dazzle Revue, in the Moeller Hippodrome, included the Ramos sisters hand balancing act, Danny's amazing hula-hoops, the DeSanto's comic turns, Julie Parkinson's illusions, and host Mikel McKittrick.

Other programs included the Camel Classroom, You Can Juggle,

Be a Clown, Circus Train Loading and Unloading demonstration, Gavioli Band Organ concerts, and elephant, carousel and kiddie train rides.

Some of Circus World Museum's collection of circus wagons made appearances around the country and even the world. Two wagons went to an exhibit at the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco. The Ringling Bros. "United States" tableau and the Ringling Bros. Bell Wagon welcomed guests to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey at Green Bay's Research Center. The "United States" also appeared in parades at the Warren Cranberry Festival and the Green Lake Harvest Festival, both in Wisconsin. It also appeared with the Cole Bros. "America" Steam Calliope in Kansas City in conjunction with an exhibit at Union Station. Finally the "United States" traveled to New York for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the John Robinson No. 1 Bandwagon was featured in the Target Thanksgiving Parade in Chicago.

The Great Circus Train journeyed through the southern and eastern portions of Wisconsin on a three-day journey with daytime stops in Lodi, Middleton, Waunakee, Mazomanie, Stoughton, Whitewater, Eagle, Waukesha, Horicon, and Germantown and overnight stops in Stoughton and Hartford. A steam engine joined the train for the third day of its trip for the first time in over 10 years.

The Great Circus Parade festival show grounds featured a new Chinese Imperial Circus and a clown show featuring Greg and Karen DeSanto. The Wild West Revue was back for another season along with the Royal Hanneford Circus, guided wagon tours, a petting menagerie, and animal rides.

The Great Circus Parade took place in downtown Milwaukee on Sunday, July 14. New elements included a patriotic section and a Cinderella section featuring the newly restored and gold-leafed Barnum & Bailey Cinderella Pony Float.

The Ringling Museum of the



The Hall of Fame big top and the newly rebuilt barn. Paul Gutheil photo

Circus presented a number of programs during the year. A celebrity Night was held on January 11. A Windjammers concert was given on January 26. The 50th anniversary of the film *Greatest Show on Earth* was celebrated with the showing of the film in January. An exhibit of circus painting was held from February 2 to May 12.

The Barnum Museum, in Bridgeport, Connecticut exhibited side show banners painted by Johnny Meah starting March 1.

The Somers Historical Society, Somers, New York, opened an exhibit on October 20 at the Somers Museum in the Elephant Hotel.

The exhibition traced the evolution of the early circuses and menageries in America through the advertising media of the early 19th century. The displayed items came from the Dr. Hugh Grant Rowell collection.

The third floor of Elephant Hotel is the home of the Somers Historical Society and Museum of the Early American Circus.

The International Circus Hall of Fame opened its summer season on June 22. The big top performance included Doug Terranova's elephants, tigers and wolves; Bill Botkin's newly built comedy car; Tony Valencia (Sarro), juggling, knives and plate spinning; Sabrina Douglas, Spanish web and Paula Howe, bird act.

During the year the south barn of the old winter quarters was restored. A \$5,000 grant was received from the Northern Indiana Community Foundation for an educational kit that will be mailed to schools introducing school children to the circus. A \$6,000 grant was received from the Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne to support the summer performance season.

A number of in kind contributions

were received. George Hubler donated two spec floats, a miniature cage and clown caricature heads. Tarzan Zerbini gave three semi-truck loads of circus equipment and other artifacts, including two big tops, ring curbs, shifting

cages, ring carpets, lighting systems, elephant blankets and cat pedestals. Rose Miller donated wagon iron, wagon wheels and a shifting den. Robert and Kay Sapati purchased Ollie Miller's baggage wagon No. 40, used on the 1938 Robbins Bros. Circus and then donated it to the Circus Hall of Fame. The Circus Model Builders donated a restored float wagon used in the *Greatest Show on Earth* movie.

The Circus Model Builders national convention was held in Peru and on the grounds of the Circus Hall of Fame. During their banquet Rudi and Sue Lentz were inducted as Circus Greats in the Hall of Fame.

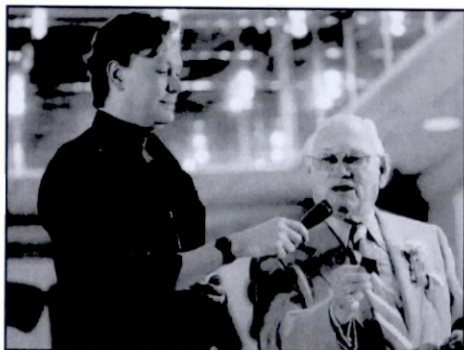
The New York State Museum in Albany opened "The Great American Circus" show on January 5. A feature was Gordon Turner's model circus. It at long last displayed the gems of George Barlow's circusiana collection, long sequestered following his death many years ago. One hundred-ten Kelty photos were displayed and a large number of lithographs.

An exhibit of Edward J. Kelty photographs opened on September 13 at the International Center of Photography on 43rd Street in New York City. Miles Barth organized the exhibit. Alan Siegal and Barth edited *This Way, The Photographs of Edward J. Kelty*.

The Cook County Heritage Society, Inc., of Gainesville, Texas, opened a display of memorabilia from the Gainesville Community Circus, which operated from 1930 to 1958, in October. The exhibit was held at the Santa Fe Depot Museum in Gainesville.

The Hertzberg Museum remained closed in 2002. At one point the Witte Museum (San Antonio) considered taking the Hertzberg material. Another possible location was the University of Texas.

Sarasota Ring of Fame inductions were held on January 26. Jackie LaClaire, Victor Julian, Gene



Todd Robbins and Ward Hall at the side show convention. Paul Gutheil photo.

Mendez and Herta Klauser were the honorees.

The first Side Show Gathering was held in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania August 30 to September 1. It was organized by James Taylor and Todd Robbins in connection with the Valley Tattoo convention and the Sword Swallowers Association International. Ward Hall was the guest of honor. The walls of the meeting room were decorated with Jack Hartle's colorful side show banners. The programs included Keith Nelson, Natasha Eruschka, Dai Andrews, Red Stuart, Ward Hall and Zamora.

Like Buffalo Bill Cody, Ward Hall made his second farewell tour in 2002. Hall and partner Chris Christ presented a new look on the front of their World of Wonders when it opened at the Florida State Fair in Tampa in February. They played the second stand of the winter tour at the Sarasota County Fair.

The regular season opened with a four-week stand at the Yonkers, New

York fair on May 17. The Meadowlands, New Jersey fair followed, June 21 to July 7. Peoria, Illinois; Superior and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Louisville, Kentucky; Jackson and Knoxville, Tennessee; Perry, Georgia; and Pensacola, Florida filled out the season with a closing stand at Dothan, Alabama on November 9.

The show was a combination of over one hundred museum exhibits and a live performance. The side show acts consisted of Pete Terhurne, dwarf fire eater; Molotov, sword swallowing; Matthew Bellvoir and Felicity Perez, knife throwing and rope cracking; Cha Cha Perez, sword ladder; David Apocalypse, human block head; Miss Zizi Wilkes, electric lady; Stephen Baker, magician; Paul Ariola, bed of nails; F. N. Stein, strong man; Lori Wilkins, snakes and scorpions and Bruce Snowden, fat man.

On August 18 the Los Angeles Times published an extensive article on sixty-seven year old Bobby Reynolds, the side show man. It covered Reynolds' career from his start at Hubert's Museum in New York City and his early experience as a talker in front of the Wonderland side show in Coney Island.

Reynolds brought his side show museum to Baltimore, Maryland October 26 to November 3. The show was presented in a tent with a 110-foot banner line. This was the only date for Reynolds in 2002.

The Side Show by the Sea Shore again appeared on the corner of Surf Avenue and West 12th Street in the heart of Brooklyn's Coney Island. The show was open from May 26 to September 4. In November Todd Robbins conducted a side show school offering classes in fire eating, snake charming, human blockhead, sword swallowing and magic.

The Blue Monkey Side Show played Greenbay, Wisconsin August 25 and Richmond, Indiana, August 31.

The national gathering of Circus and Traveling Show Ministries was held in

Sarasota, Florida January 3-7. Sister Charlotte, national coordinator and national circus chaplain Father Jerry Hogan, directed the activities. A circus mass was held on January 6 at St. Martha's church.

During the year Father Jerry crisscrossed the country, blessing circuses, circus people and performing baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Various animal rights groups continued to harass circuses in 2002. The Feld organization led the opposition to their efforts.

On January 7 Kenneth Feld placed full-page advertisements in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune titled "An Open Letter to Animal Rights Groups." It referred to the trial in San Jose, California against Mark Gable, which was tossed out of court after being prompted by PeTA.

When the Ringling-Barnum Red unit played Jacksonville, Florida, January 16-21, it was met with a full page animal rights ad on January 15 in the Florida Times Union with the usual misinformation about Ringling animals. On January 17 an article appeared in the same paper providing Feld's reaction to the ad. Animal rights protesters picketed the show on January 20.

On July 19 PeTA sent a protester dressed as a devil to dance on the grave of Gunther Gebel-Williams, who passed away one-year before.

On September 25 PeTA filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission alleging Ringling Bros. new advertisement featuring the endangered Asian elephant constitute deceptive advertising.

In April Pat Darby, chief cook and bottle washer of PAWS, was crying the blues. PAWS had planned to start moving its six elephants and other animals to a 2,300 acre ranch near San Andreas, California. But PAWS held off the move indefinitely, and started planning a security system and filed suit against two San Andreas neighbors and a newspaper publisher. PAWS attorney Sharon Sinns, claimed "It's a conspiracy, they are trying to stop the project."

PAWS, a non-for-profit group, had spent three million dollars buying and developing the sanctuary, titled Ark 2000, in the San Andreas area.



However, it had other problems. The Department of Fish and Game told PAWS they had some work to do on fencing and an elephant barn before the move could be made. So it appeared that PAWS would stay on their thirty-acre sanctuary at Galt, California for a while.

The December *Rotarian* magazine contained an extensive article about Derby and her associate Ed Stewart. Both are members of the Rotary Club of Galt, California. Derby's classification is animal behavior and Stewart's is captive wildlife management. The article told of the couple founding the Performing Animal Welfare Society in 1984. It said there were 75 creatures, including elephants, lions, bobcats, tigers, bears and wolves on the facility. According to the article PAWS is supported by private and corporate donations, as well as dues paid by about 30,000 members, and that its annual operating budget is about \$2.5 million, spending \$2,400 each week just to feed the animals. The article did not address the problems the pair has created for circuses and zoos.

On May 29 the Spokane (Washington) *Spokesman-Review* published an article about the tax-exempt status of PETA. It reported; "An animal-rights group should lose its tax-exempt status because it gave \$1,500 to a group the FBI lists as 'terrorist,' say two pro-business groups on the other side of the ongoing debate on animal treatment.

"An expert in tax law agrees that PeTA might have jeopardized its crucial status as a nonprofit charity. A form PeTA filed with the Internal Revenue Service shows that it gave \$1,500 to the North American Earth Liberation Front last April 'to support program activities.' PeTA offered several different explanations for the payment. The Center for Consumers Freedom, a coalition of restaurants, and the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, a group composed of mostly business and property owners, say the donation should cost PeTA its nonprofit status.

"PeTA President Ingrid Newkirk said groups that don't agree with its mission are looking for reasons to hurt them. The FBI has labeled ELF and its ally Animal Liberation Front

as terrorist's organizations. It estimates the two groups have committed more than 600 criminal acts since 1996, primarily arson, causing at least \$43 million in damages."

PeTA had been after the six polar bears on Suarez Bros. Circus for eighteen months. On November 11 U. S. and Puerto Rico officials seized the bears. One was sent to the Detroit zoo, two to the Tacoma, Washington zoo and three went to the Asheboro, North Carolina zoo. One of these died enroute. A seventh bear was seized in March and was sent to the Baltimore, Maryland zoo. The Suarez show had been charged by Puerto Rico officials with cruelty to animals shortly after it arrived there. The circus was found not-guilty.

In May Red Roof Inns, one of the country's economy hotel chains, entered into an agreement with the Humane Society of the United States



We lost our friend Parley Baer last year. Cherie Valentine collection.

to promote to its Pets for Life and Disaster Recovery programs. This association was hard to understand. It may have been to get people with pets to stay at Red Roof Inns.

An animal protester was arrested after jumping into the circus ring with a banner protesting the use of animals on October 27 during a performance of Ringling-Barnum Blue in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Weymouth, Massachusetts Town Council passed an ordinance prohibiting wild animal circuses from playing there.

During the year the American circus world lost a number of members.

They included Joseph Arcaris, animal trainer; Harold Barnes, tight wire performer; Parley Baer, ringmaster, press agent and movie actor; Vlastimir Calla Bertini, performer; Dr. Charles Boas, circus owner; Delia Zacchini Cristiani, performer; Remo Cristiani, performer; Phillip E. Chandler, performer; Bill Elbirn, agent; Henry "Blackie" Escalante, performer; Marjorie June Hackett, performer; Dr. Heinz Heck, zoo vet; Al House, former CFA president; Robert "Smokey" Jones, elephant trainer; Francisca Luna, trapeze performer; Dean McMurray, circus executive; Hanna Pallenberg, bear presenter; Earl Schmid, circusiana sales person; Bob Stoddard, fan and *Circus Report* contributor; Col. Edward B. Smith, circus agent; Arthur C. Spellman, circus fan; George Shellenberger, circus builder and Scott Taylor, ringmaster.

It would not be possible to compile this report with out the help of many people. Don Marks' *Circus Report* again provided the most extensive amount of material. Other material came from Cherie Valentine's *Backyard*; Ernest Albrecht's *Spectacle*; and the *White Tops*. Paul Gutheil provided more photos than anyone else. An extensive amount of information came from circus Internet sites.

Other contributors included Bill Biggerstaff, Wayne Bolz, Jon Brown, Don Ballard, Chuck Burnes, Bob Childress, Don Covington, Milonga Cline, Clayton Cox, Tom Dunwoody, Donald Farbanks, Earl Finger, Bill Fowler, Bill Hall, John Hart, Paul Horsman, Walt Hudson, Bobby Gibbs, Bob Goldsack, Sara Gordon, David James, Ron Johnson, Harry L. Kingston, Bob Kellogg, Bob Lessard, Robert MacDougall, Dan McGinnis, Sr., Edward Meals, Jerry Overstreet, Rex Owens, Pete Pepke, Alice Phillips, John Polacsek, Peter Rosa, Richard Reynolds III, Ralph Rogers, Don Sandman, Ron Sanford, Robert Smith, Michael Sporrer, Arthur Stone, Robert Sugarman, Edward Swenson, Jim Swafford, Gordon Taylor, Tim Tegge, Lane Talburt, Herb Uckert, Bob Unterreiner.

This report is dedicated to the memory of Joseph T. Bradbury, a friend of fifty years, who left us in 2002.p

# A Conversation With MICKEY KING

By Steve Gossard

*This article was presented at the 2002 Circus Historical Society convention.*

If you travel from Bloomington, Illinois to Peru, Indiana you will need to drive north on Interstate 55 to Chenoa, and turn east on route 24 into the heart of Indiana. Setting out in the morning hours in mid-July under a brilliant blue sky we rasp over the rough stretches of road and glide over the smooth places.

Highway 24 in Illinois cannot be mistaken for any road elsewhere. On the one hand the railroad tracks run parallel. The high scruffy embankment of wild prairie vegetation obscures our vision. On the other hand we have the vast, lush fertile fields.

Mickey King in the 1930s. Pfening Archives.



Passing through Forrest, Illinois I make the same joke every time. "Did I miss it? I couldn't see it for the trees." At Gilman we stop and wait for a freight train to pass. To our left, Kathy points out, is the Amtrak stop, no bigger than a phone booth. The little town of Chatham is notable for being the site of the worst rail disaster in history. The incident took place when a bridge collapsed under a passenger train in the 1880s. The town of Watseka seems to be five miles long and two blocks wide.

Proceeding on toward Indiana the railroad tracks have gone their separate way. A wild, spontaneous growth of foliage borders the shoulders of the road on either side; giving way to vast expansive fields of beans and corn. The panorama slowly scrolls by our side windows. Stands of trees seem to float like islands on this sea of green. Farm complexes sprout up

on the horizon like mushrooms, and slowly grow into view. They creep by at a distance and disappear from our peripheral vision, going to ground behind us in the west. Solitary, decrepit farmhouses and barns appear as stark angular shapes of red, white and black against this homogenous field of green. Small mysterious villages beckon to us on the horizon. They appear and vanish like mirages, in a state of suspended animation. We want to know how they can survive out here.

Here and there along the way surface mining has left stark monuments rising



Mickey King as photographed by Maurice Seymour in the 1930s. Pfening Archives.

above the plain. This is their achievement: the money is dug out of the earth leaving an irregular hole and a pile. I speculate that a thousand years from now archaeologists will dig through these mounds searching for burial goods, finding nothing.

How much should I tell you? So much seems trivial, yet everything is important. Now we move into Indiana.

At Valparaiso I miss the route 24 by-pass turn-off, and we drag through town on the business route. Further on, the route 31 exit takes us into Peru. The Circus Festival is under way and much of the downtown has been turned into a carnival. We pass all of this for the time being and turn at the hospital sign.

The fourth floor is the long-term care unit of Duke Memorial Hospital. We find our way to room 430 where Mickey King is dozing in her chair by the window. The features of her face are accentuated in relief by the raking sunlight. The dignity, and suffering, and humor of her youthful will

are embossed in the organic quality of her aged features. In my mind's eye I see her as she was filmed in 1937: spinning on a trapeze, flipping over and over in one-arm swings at the end of a rope, sliding to the floor and bouncing on her toes with enthusiastic energy.

I have known Mickey for some years—a long time for me, a short time for her, relatively speaking. I know her story well. Born into a large French Canadian family in Sutton Hoo, Quebec in 1905, she was a woman at age twelve. Today she is still a girl at age 96. Mickey fell three times in her career. Each fall was nearly fatal, but each time she came back to climb the web and work again. Mickey would not be suppressed. She met the challenges of the exacting, exciting life that she had chosen with strength of character. She traveled throughout the U.S., Europe and Australia, returning when the war broke out in the early 1940s. Her art, her career and her personality were her identity. The name "Mickey King" was well known by an elite class of people the world over. The name represented supreme skill, courage and professionalism. That was what "Mickey King" meant in those days. Now in the hallway outside her door small humpbacked creatures creep by with their walkers like ants on an errand. Mickey King has come to this.

Kathy and I sit in silence while she sleeps. It is a nice "facility." It doesn't smell like rot or disinfectant. It doesn't smell like anything at all, and that is a good sign. The staff seems attentive and respect common courtesy, and that, too, is a good sign. I sit looking at the roof of an adjoining structure through the window. I am glad I came and I want to stay, but already I want to escape.

Eventually Mickey rouses herself. I take her hand to keep it from shaking. Besides being blind, she has lost most of her hearing. I have to shout into her ear. "Who is it?" she says.

"It's Steve and Kathy."

"Who?"

"Steve... Steve and Kathy from Bloomington."

"Kathy... she took such good care of me when I was there," she says. "Give me a big hug, honey. How are

the girls, and how are those sweet grandbabies?"

Kathy tells her that our grandson has just turned one year old. From the look on her face we aren't sure that she has understood. "Help me up," she says. "Can you straighten out my dress in back? It's bunched up and doesn't feel so good when I sit down."



Mickey lacing canvas on her husband's King Bros. Circus in 1942. Pfening Archives.

On the dresser is a photograph of Mickey that was taken in 1935, wearing a gold two-piece costume. Years ago an old trapeze flyer named Buster Melzora told me, "Those skimpy outfits Mickey King used to wear would drive the men wild." Mickey tells me, "When I die I want that picture on my casket." I write a post-it note to that effect and stick it to the back of the frame.

"Call my lawyer for me, will you," Mickey says. "Make sure I'm buried in that place I've got set aside in Bloomington." Her conversation has become increasingly fatalistic lately.

The one-time winter quarters of the American Circus Corporation at Peru, Indiana, claims to have been the circus capital of the world. I will let them dispute that issue with Baraboo, Wisconsin; but Bloomington, Illinois was certainly the capital of trapeze. Mickey's fondest memories are linked to the city where she trained with the Flying Wards. She wants to spend the rest of eternity there.

"If you see our John boy at the winter quarters," Mickey says, "tell him to put on his best duds and take me to the circus. My birthday is coming

up and they always plan a party for me out at the Circus Hall of Fame." Mickey cannot get out of her chair without help any more. I doubt that anyone plans to try to take her out this year.

"How tall are you, Mickey?" I ask her.

"What?"

"How... tall... are... you?"

"Oh, four... something... um, almost five."

"Four foot eleven inches?"

"Something like that."

Now she begins to speak German, asking us a question. "We don't speak German," Kathy says. Mickey repeats it for us.

"Je ne sais pas," I say.

"I'm not talking French," she says.

"I know, but we don't speak German," I tell her.

Mickey repeats the question and translates for us: "Do you know that all things are understood when you speak German?" There is so much irony in this situation. She sings us a little German song, which we don't ask her to interpret. Her husky voice drones sweetly through the shadows of the small room. It seems to describe the poetry of her life's story—an enigmatic and indecipherable song of irrepressible character. It rings from deep inside her chest like the mellow chimes of a songbird. Most of the songs that Mickey sings, even those in English, are lost in obscurity. They come from a different world than we know, a more innocent world of alternatives that are lost to us today. This is a part of Mickey's naive charm.

Mickey will tell you as much as she can recall, or as much as she wants you to know, whichever comes first. Sometimes that isn't as much as you want to know; sometimes it is more. "That girl that married Art Concello," she says, "Maggie is her name..."

"Yes?"

"Antoinette didn't shoot her." Antoinette Concello, the greatest woman trapeze flyer of her time, was Mickey's sister. She was known for many years as the first and only woman ever to complete a triple somersault from the trapeze to a wrist-catch with a catcher in a flying return act. I know all about Antoinette's history. The story in question relates to Antoinette's hus-

band, Art Concello. Art was the greatest trapeze flyer of his time. Later he became the general manager of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Art is alternately considered to be the most controversial and the greatest circus manager of the 20th century. He steered the Greatest Show on Earth through the most difficult period of its long history in the 1940s and '50s. Antoinette, says Mickey, did not point a gun through the window of Art's private car and shoot the beautiful Australian girl who sat on his lap, but this event has cast a shadow over Mickey's mind for 50 years.

Now Mickey sits for a moment turning something over in her mind. "1201 East Emerson Street in Bloomington," she says. This was the site where she had broken in with the Flying Wards 80 years ago. "I lived there. The barn was back behind the house. I think they made a bad decision when they tore it down. Those apartments back behind the house, my dad built those. He lived there for several years." I know that she remembers when the practice barn was destroyed in the 1970s, but I am not sure that she is aware that the house and apartments were demolished recently. If she doesn't know, I won't have the heart to tell her. The Ward training quarters has been an important theme in her life. I let the subject drop.

The structure that was called "The Grand Hotel" since WW II, was used as a restaurant until it was repossessed by the bank last winter. The house that had been the home of so many great trapeze artists over the years, and the apartment that was built for Mickey's father were reduced to rubble a few weeks ago. The remains were plowed into the hole that had been the basement. In all likelihood, the new owners will build condominiums on this site. Archaeologists may dig for traces of this lost history one day, but nothing will remain.

I go down to the gift shop to buy a candy bar because Mickey wants chocolate. We talk about one thing or another. Later she wants some apple sauce. I make the request at the nurse's station, and a small plastic container is brought. Eating is one of



Antoinette Concello, sister of Mickey King. Pfening Archives.

the few small pleasures left to her. The conversation wanes. Mickey is growing tired.

We finally beg off, though we know that she doesn't want us to leave. "Give me a big hug, honey, and give those girls a big hug for me and those sweet babies," she says. Hoping to see her again, we reluctantly leave Mickey sitting there waiting for the Final Interruption.

The automatic doors open for us onto the street. The pavement is wet after a brief shower. We will stop downtown for dinner. The box office at the community center is holding tickets for us. We have never seen the Peru Amateur Circus, and we are looking forward to the show.

Bar-b-cue pork chop sandwiches and chips, lemon shake-ups. The flies aren't so bad as they sometimes are during the hot, dry summer days. People browse the fairway booths. The store windows are all dressed out in the circus theme. Peru is a nice town. The people are friendly. What is more, the community is proud of their circus heritage. They want to preserve it.

Let me say a word or two here about circus historical research. I recall my good friend, Walt Graybeal, one of the finest trapeze flyers of his time. Walt was 35 years my senior, and he was my best friend for ten years. We met every Tuesday afternoon for lunch at a place called the "Winner's" bar just off of South Main Street in Bloomington. When I first

met him Walt was spending his days sitting in that smoky bar feeling like he had been reduced to the status of an amiable old "character." If the subject came up-it seldom did-Walt would admit that he was disappointed in the city of Bloomington for ignoring its circus history. "It's like they wanted to sweep it under the carpet," he said. The local historical museum wouldn't even allow a square foot of space on the wall for a plaque commemorating circus history. When Harold Genders died a few years ago the local newspaper wouldn't print a word about his circus career unless I was willing to pay them to do it. My sense of purpose in doing circus research-at times a thankless job-has been to give the circus people the acknowledgement that they deserve.

Walt's accomplishments in this important phase of his life, he thought, had been ignored until I published an article about him in *Bandwagon* magazine in 1989. That article, I like to think, helped him through to the end. I recall standing over his death bed, when he pointed to the wall at the foot of his bed and said, "Get that magazine, and put it up right there." When I returned to tack a copy of his article on the wall he was sleeping. That was the last time that I saw him conscious. Knowing that it had been so important to him will always mean a lot to me.

Now an interesting mix of people parade before us as we sit on the bleachers of the Peru Community Center waiting for the youth circus to begin: professional people, working people, young and old, large and small, people of many classes and races, some lean people with hard faces, just normal people. They all have something in common. The atmosphere is bright and expansive. Aerial apparatus hangs from the rafters of the high ceiling. The babble of the crowd fills the place. When the lights dim the first event of the show includes a double trapeze act.

The historic double trapeze act was performed in this way: One trapeze bar was suspended directly below another. Two performers would begin with a display of poses on the two trapeze bars. This would evolve into an increasingly dangerous series

of flips, drops and catches from the high bar to the low bar; sometimes incorporating contortion poses, the use of iron jaw devices (one of the performers spinning from a teeth-hold suspended from a swivel), or a break-away feature (leather straps connecting one performer's wrists to the other's ankles, and a drop of eight or ten feet). The double trapeze is one of the oldest and most sensational of all aerial performances.

In the early 1900s a young brother and sister team named Eddie and Jenny Ward taught themselves to perform the difficult and dangerous aerial act called the "double trapeze." This performance nearly killed Jenny in 1911 when she fell 30 feet to land across the ring curb. Her backbone, it was said, was bowed in the shape of a horseshoe. Her self-imposed physical therapy was painful in the extreme. Jenny worked every day pulling herself up on the guy ropes to straighten out her spine. She overcame the disability to perform again the following year. This was characteristic of the Wards' endurance and determination. It is the essential nature of the double trapeze performance that the performers must exercise extreme discipline and endurance.

The Wards were the most daring double trapeze performers of their day, and this was the beginning of a great tradition. By the 1920s Eddie was supplying all of the complex aerial performances for the American Circus Corporation, but Jennie did not live to see his success.

In 1918 while sitting in a side track near Ivanhoe, Indiana the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus train was rear-ended by an empty troop train traveling at high speed. The old wooden coaches were telescoped, piling up debris and bodies in a hopeless tangle that soon caught fire from the gas lights. Those who were able to free themselves worked desperately into the early daylight hours trying to save friends and coworkers who were still trapped within the rubble before the fire consumed



Edward and Jennie Ward. Bloomington Public Library collection.

them. Eddie lived the rest of his life with the memory of the screams of the people who perished that day ringing in his ears. Jenny Ward was killed instantly. After years of study I published a history of trapeze in 1991. In all of my years of circus research I have never seen a double trapeze act performed. Today the Peru youth circus is presenting this act in much the same way that it was performed when it was invented in the 1850s. The two young performers are roughly the same ages that Eddie and Jenny Ward were when they began performing this act nearly 100 years ago.

The fascinating, exciting circus people of Bloomington have been

reduced to a linear outline of local legend in their own hometown. It is as if they have been plowed into the hole that was the basement of the Grand Hotel and leveled off. I have fleshed them out with words, brushing in the subtle tones and warm hues through research and publication. A large part of my soul is vested in their memory. Now they are more alive, more real to me than most of the shallow mechanical people that I meet every day. Didn't I bring them back from the dead; with their passions, their pains and their hopes, their failures and their accomplishments; into a three dimensional world complete? Didn't I think for them and speak for them? Didn't I feel for them? Looking up at these two young people, brilliantly silhouetted by the spotlight against the dark shadows of the ceiling, to me they are the essence of Eddie and Jenny Ward. I don't mind saying that watching them brings tears to my eyes. It gives me chills. The rest of the show is excellent, but for me, seeing the double trapeze act for the first time is a unique thrill.

We spend the night at a very nice hotel on the outskirts of town, and visit the winter quarters, now called The Circus Hall of Fame, the next morning. We have a great time, but it all seems like an anticlimax after the events of yesterday.

The utility poles on our return trip home divide the time and space like separate frames in a film that is run backward through a projector. We have our goal in mind. Again we reach Illinois, with the railroad embankment confining us on one side of the road. On the other side the open spaces seem to stretch out infinitely, like the past and the future, in all directions at once.

I am thinking of those young kids enacting that historic performance, and of Mickey as she sits in her chair by the window. In my mind I will always picture her beautiful face, a portrait of dignity, at once young and old, illuminated by the muted sunlight coming in through her window.



The Ward training barn in Bloomington, Illinois. It was later owned by Art Concello. Milner Library Special Collections, Illinois State University.

# Frank A. Robbins

## a most successful failure

### PART EIGHTEEN

By Robert Sabia

1915--another autumn--Better than a half century ago, Alan Jay Lerner wrote these memorable lyrics to this featured song of the Lerner and Loewe's hit musical PAINT YOUR WAGON. "Another autumn--I've known the chill before --But ev'ry autumn - I feel it more and more. For you can dream in Spring - When ev'ry hope is high, But when the fall comes in they all begin to fade and die. Another autumn--so sweet when all is well, But how it haunts you--when all is wrong. For one thing time has shown if you're alone when autumn comes, You'll be alone--all winter long." Could Mr. Lerner been thinking about the circus life of Frank A. Robbins when he put pen to paper in early 1951? Most probably he had never even heard of our hero. Yet in those few words, he captured the circumstances of Frank A. as the winter 1914/15 began. Frank A. had suffered too many "another autumns" when he found himself alone but not in the sense of his being absent any friends and loyal family members. He was too good of a man for that. Rather he was alone in his thoughts. How had he failed when others had succeeded? Did he not work as hard or even harder than the next man? Few would even question this. Did he lack drive or imagination? Certainly not; he was always at the forefront of the industry, presenting circus programs that were unmatched by his competitors of like size enterprises. Did he not understand the business? No one would even suggest such a notion. Did he experience incredibly bad luck? While it is true that he had weather, wrecks and other challenges, they were not any more severe than his competitors. Then why did he find himself in this dilemma? Why did



Floyd King find himself in similar circumstances in 1956? How about Jess Adkins in 1938, Fred Buchanan in 1931, George Christy in 1930, and Clyde Beatty in 1956. They were all good men who knew the circus business. They all had good years when profits flowed easily. Yet as mentioned at the outset of this writing several years ago, they all ultimately failed; not as human beings but as circus owners.

Frank A. Robbins used some beautiful lithographs during the life of his circus. This design was printed by the Russell Morgan Company. Ken Harck collection.

It was and still is a very tough business and maybe only the lucky survive. Is it not true that even the great John Ringling lost his circus empire in the end and John Ringling North came very close to doing the same? Perhaps it is just luck after all in an environment that most are destined to fail and only a few lucky ones survive. As optimistic as Frank A. always was, to be broke once more had to be wearing, causing him to muse, "Is this just 'another autumn' or the beginning of the end?" Only time would tell but time was running out.

At the onset of 1915, unlike the rumblings of artillery constantly being heard on the Western Front, there was an ominous quiet from the Robbins winter quarters at the fairgrounds in Trenton, New Jersey. Usually there would be tid-bits about Frank A.'s wanderings

throughout the Northeast, particularly around New York City. He still lived in Jersey City and would be trying to place his sundry acts in the vaudeville circuit until the opening of his circus in April. This year there was nothing. Granted that his vaudeville offerings were probably limited to his excellent two elephants act, having sold his greatly skilled liberty horse act, but nothing was mentioned at all in the trade newspapers. Quite appropriately, The Great War dominated the news, even in the trade papers, as many foreign acts were broken up, losing their male members to the various shades of drab colors of their Army's uniforms. Animal imports virtually ceased because the cornucopia of most animals, Africa, was under the domination of the warring factions, and thereby was severely restricted in its commercial activities. And then there were those casualty reports with France experiencing nearly a million by the end of 1914, Germany as many, Russia far in excess of that number, and Austria-Hungary not far behind. Only the British Empire seemed to be spared such horrific numbers, but this was because Britain was never a land power and, as such, had a relatively small standing army. Fear not, for soon Britain would make up for this latent deficiency in 1915 to share proportionally in the body count. Even though the United States considered this huge conflict to be a European one and accordingly proclaimed its neutrality, a pronounced pallor descended across our land. Most of our population were either immigrants or first or second generation. Many spoke a variety of European languages as their primary tongue. If they could read, it generally was not in English. The war was real to them as were many of the cities that were being leveled by the conflict. Obviously, at year's end this was not the season to be jolly and there was no realistic hope that when spring-time arrived, the war would be ended. So with the Spring, what was to be of the circus business? And what was to be of the Frank A Robbins Circus?

It will be recalled that sometime

(Season of 1915)  
**Middletown, Monday, May 24**  
**FRANK A. ROBBINS All-Feature SHOWS**  
 2 PERFORMANCES—RAIN OR SHINE—AT 2 AND 8 P. M.  
 ONLY CIRCUS OF REAL WORTH COMING  
**100-Great Artists-100**  
 Led by the World's Most Celebrated Male and Female Equestrians, Acrobats and Aerialists and Specialty Performers, including  
**50-Beautiful Ladies-50**



THE LATEST OF EUROPEAN  
**★ STAR FEATURES ★**  
 THE MOST HAZARDOUS OF  
 ALL DEATH-DEFYING  
 PERFORMANCES

The First and Only Man That Has  
 Ever Attempted This Unheard-of  
 And Seemingly Impossible Feat

**SEE** DARE DEVIL LONG LEAP  
 THE GAP ON HIS HEAD  
**20-Funny Old Clowns-20**  
 Tango Horses, Tango Elephants, Bunny-Hug Bears, Waltzing Ponies  
**Stupendous Menagerie**  
 OF TRAINED WILD BEASTS  
**GRAND FREE STREET PARADE DAILY**  
**ONE TICKET ADMITS TO ALL**

This newspaper ad was used early in the 1915 season. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise identified.

during 1914 Frank A. mortgaged his train to the Erie Lithograph Co. to defray the unpaid invoices for lithos delivered and to be delivered thereby keeping a pending attachment at bay and preventing the closing of the show. According to a letter written in 1975 by son Milton Robbins to Chappie Fox and Tom Parkinson, in 1915 Frank A. mortgaged all of the animals except for the elephants, several horses and the pony drill to Erie in order to secure much needed lithographs. There just wasn't any other potential financial resources left to tap.

The initial manifestation of life

remaining was a blurb in the March 20th issue of *Billboard* which revealed that "Work on the Frank A. Robbins Shows is being pushed along at a rapid pace at the winter quarters in Jersey City, New Jersey. O.C. Kutzer is foreman, and has a very capable crew of eighteen men. Everything will be ready for the band to play in a few weeks. The show this year will be the same as last season—twelve cars. Mr. Farrell will be in the ticket wagon; A. H. (Punch) Allen will manage the side-show; Prof. Henry Kern will have a sixteen piece band; Ed. Holland, 24 hour man; Wm. DeMott, equestrian director; O. C. Kutzer (sic O. T. Kretzer), boss canvasman, assisted by Steve Roberts; W. H. Winters, trainmaster; Fred King, side show canvas. The privilege department will be headed by Joseph Hughes, legal adjuster. Joe Conly and George Dieber will have several concessions. The candy stands, hamburger, penny arcade etc., will be handled by Milton A. (Toots) Robbins. The canvas will be new from front to back, and the performance will be better than in any previous season. One of the big features will be the leaping-the-gap-on-the-head act—an act claimed to have never before been attempted." A quick look at this show drafted press release immediately raises the question regarding the location of the winterquarters as being at Jersey City rather than the known location of the Trenton, New Jersey fair grounds. This may have been a simple misstatement as the business office remained in Jersey City (really Frank A.'s home address) and that is where the press release probably emanated. Given the sorry state of the finances, a crew of 18 seems rather large, not because there wasn't much work to be done but there wasn't much money about to pay the men. It was nice to see that several long-time associates were still around willing to try it again. They included Clarence Farrell, Henry Kern, Joseph Hughes, William DeMott, and by now the well-seasoned Milt Robbins. One may also question the size of the train at 12 cars. It could have been a bit small-

er but if it remained on 12 cars, its consist probably was 1 advance, 3 stocks, 5 flats and 3 coaches. And lastly, it is doubtful that any of the canvas was new although it is possible that some was new to the show having been previously used by others.

In the next week's issue of *Billboard*, some clarification was provided by stating "The Frank A. Robbins Shows opened their shops at Trenton, N. J., March 1, and are progressing rapidly with repairing, painting, etc. The cars have just been returned from the railroad shops, thoroughly overhauled. The elephants, horses, mules and ponies are all working in vaudeville, and will be tip-top shape for the opening. The only additions the show will make the coming season will be an air calliope and a new water wagon, as the management doesn't consider anything else necessary." Regarding the air calliope and water wagon, no evidence has been uncovered corroborating these additions. While the water wagon could easily escape notice, it is assumed that the air calliope would be part of the parade and therefore susceptible to a casual mention in the local press, but no such mention has yet to be found.

A bit of personal sadness descended upon the Robbins household on February 28th when the mother of wife Mattie, Mrs. Catherine Bliss, died at her home in Madison, Wisconsin, at the age of eighty-eight. Mrs. Bliss was matriarch of a large circus family of at least eight children, six of which survived her.

As the start of the season drew near, Frank's A.'s staff and performers rounded into shape. From the standpoint of staffing, in addition to those individuals previously listed, Mattie Robbins was back again managing the front door; daughter Winnie continued her excellent performance as the press representative; William Thompson, elephants and animals; Ed Holland, 24 hour man; and Charles Quintard, the superintendent of stock. Sam M. Dawson was the manager of the advance car with a 15 man crew.

Notwithstanding the depleted cash reserves, Frank A. presented a strong performance for his public.

After an initial walk around Grand Entry; the clown, Horace Laird, sang a song from a swinging perch in a unique act; William DeMott, with a troupe of ponies, clearly demonstrated the continuous work in the vaudeville circuit and was well received; The Varro Brothers then offered a comedy acrobatic novelty act with a pleasing mixture of challenging stunts with considerable humour; William Thompson and his marvelous elephants; a collective clown act focused upon the barber shop; The Mitchells, and Laird and Farrell at opposite ends of the big top, both doing revolving and breakaway ladder acts; The DeMotts, with a wonderful double hurdle act; the great feature of Hillary Long, performing magic on his head, including ascending and descending a flight of stairs, and remarkably, leaping the gap on his head after a decent from the top of the tent and landing on his head, a true big-time circus act; clowns with a mock prize fight; Miss Leseler, Miss Price and Laird and Lester with a fine aerial display; Miss Winona Robbins with her very clever high school horse act with an outstanding demonstration of cakewalking; clowns again, this time with a mock menage act; Hillary Long was back again with a head balancing trapeze act culminating a slide for life from the big top roof; a clown band with arrangements that tested the very viability of the music business; The

Wilson Family (4) with a wire act of note; a double trapeze act by Dare Devil Price, the Mitchells and the Lesters, all demonstrating their professionalism throughout; a fitting climax to the performance with a comedy mule act given by George Primrose; a first-class finish to a first-class program. As a concert offering, there was a wild west presentation at a quarter per.

In the principle side show, the manager, Punch Allen, gathered the likes of the Dixie Minstrels; Madam Rome, telepathy; Bal Birma, human Salamander; Charles LeNoise, with a musical array; Elsie Jute, snakes; Prince Arthur, magic; Johnny Ward, sword swallower; Duke Allen, Punch and Judy; Grimmings Quartette, song and dance; and Oriental Dancing with Princess Selama, Princess Irma and Grace Moore. A fifteen cent admission was charged.

The 1915 season commenced in Trenton on April 29th in a rather spectacular fashion. Once again, it was a Society Circus that gathered very special publicity; this time for the benefit of the New Jersey Children's Home Society. The circus parade was augmented by local dandies and athletes to create an event worth seeing. Locals actually took chairs from their homes so they would be comfortable during the process. Special to this event was the Universal Film Company's star, Mary Fuller, who would be seen shortly in that studio's forthcoming film, *Daughter of the Circus*. Universal took movies of the circus parade, the crowds and certain circus acts during the afternoon performance for inclusion in this 6 reeler. As had been done in the past, the Robbins Circus built special boxes for the sponsors and patrons of the event to be used for this date only. Rain and cold spoiled the evening festivities holding the attendance back somewhat. The afternoon crowds were described as large.

The show then railed some 70 plus miles south to play a date at Penns Grove (4/30), across the Delaware River from Wilmington, DE. Seasonal chilly weather here and the next day at Vineland only marginally affected the good attendance at both stands. Had anyone in Penns Grove

1880-1915

### 35th Annual Tour THE FRANK A. ROBBINS THE ALL FEATURE SHOW

#### OFFICIAL ROUTE NO. 6

Newport, N. H.,	June 3
Concord, N. H.,	June 4
Franklin, N. H.,	June 5

#### SUNDAY

Laconia, N. H.,	June 7
Plymouth, N. H.,	June 8
Woodsville, N. H.,	June 9
Littleton, N. H.,	June 10
Lancaster, N. H.,	June 11
Colebrook, N. H.,	June 12

#### SUNDAY

Berlin, N. H.,	June 14
Bethel, Me.,	June 15
Norway, Me.,	June 16

been reading the New York newspapers of record, he/she would have observed an ominous notice placed by the German Embassy to the effect that it was an open season on the *RMS Lusitania*, which was sailing the next day on the morning tide. The *Lusitania* departed New York on schedule with much fanfare. After two more dates in the remote southern New Jersey (Salem (5/3) and Bridgeton), Frank A. headed into the industrial northern New Jersey with a final stopover at the midpoint of the state, Lakewood (5/5). Elizabeth (5/6) was the entry point to the New York metropolitan area and was significant for several reasons.

This city, a frequent repeat date on Robbins' itinerary, turned in its expected good business. In addition, the entire cast of the film *Daughter of the Circus* rejoined for the day with much additional filming taken about the lot. And many of the citizens expected to be immortalized because they anticipated being in the film as background crowds. May 7th brought the circus to nearby Plainfield and all the excitement that circus day represented in 1915. The Boy Scouts, YMCA and local clowns combined to make the circus parade both larger and having a familiar flavor supporting an Anti-T. B. campaign. There was a large afternoon house followed by a much smaller evening attendance caused by very high winds and gloomy skies. A first for this writer was the installation of a special telephone station at the lot by the New York Telephone Company for the convenience of the general public. Earlier that day off the coast of Ireland, the *Lusitania*

Andrew Downie's LaTena Circus provided opposition to Robbins in 1915.

sailed on despite the official Admiralty warnings that at least one German U-Boat lurked about. The Captain's nonchalance was abruptly changed with at least two large explosions below the waterline. The great ship quickly sank with hundreds drowning. 124 American citizens were in that death count. The European War had finally reached across the Atlantic and the American public was outraged at Germany. One wonders if this outrage would have been redirected had the *Lusitania* was carrying a significant amount of munitions in direct violation of the Hague Convention. There was a dread within the United States that this country would be drawn into the fray. However realistic this fear was, it did little to put the Northeast in a circus frame of mind.

There was nothing that Frank A. could do about the international situation. He could only continue on his tour, hoping against hope that business would somehow achieve profitability for the season underway. Dover (5/8) followed with a good day with very favorable reviews about the thrilling acts. A couple of new dates at Franklin Furnace and Butler were OK with weather not being the best. It worsened at Hackensack (5/12) when heavy rain really did a job on business. Those patrons that did come delighted in the program. Particularly cited was Hillary Long whose poster of leaping-the-gap was said not to deceive by any measure. On May 13th, Secretary of State William J. Bryan, through U.S. Ambassador Grimes in Berlin, delivered a severe and frank Official Note of Protest to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After some tense days, the Imperial Government replied with a Formal Apology and provided certain assur-

ances of the unfettered right of American vessels to proceed on the open seas. There was a collective sigh of relief across this land of ours. Meanwhile, Frank A. went about his business in completing the New Jersey route with dates at Rutherford, Englewood and Monclair (5/15) drawing fair crowds. At Englewood he was about 10 days ahead of Al. F. Wheeler's New Model Shows (5/24). It paid to be first in.

On Sunday, the Ensemble then made the big leap across the Hudson River to enter Connecticut at South Norwalk (5/17). It followed LaTena (friend Andrew Downie) by 5 days. There Hillary Long strangely performed under the alias of Daredevil DeVoe. It was noted in the local paper that Daredevil DeVoe performed his act at a Norwalk theatre some months ago and still thrilled the large crowd with his exploits. Because South Norwalk was the initial stand in Connecticut, a tax of \$100 for the big show and \$10 for each of the two side shows was collected. There was no tax on the rain which flowed in buckets during the morning and the street parade. Ansonia was only fair and Torrington (5/19) wasn't any better. During the parade a small dog whose size was greatly exceeded by his bravado, decided to take on one of the two elephants. After much barking and some nipping, the elephant reared and trumpeted, almost throwing the sleepy rider off his seat. It took some soothing comments to the elephant, and not so soothing remarks to the owner of the dog, before the march could continue. At Bristol (5/20), Robbins trailed LaTena by only three days. Business was disappointing but not surprising. On the LaTena combine, 10 of the canvasmen struck over the failure of the circus to pay the agreed-upon wage scale. Represented by a Bristol attorney, the canvasmen were paid off and then quit. The wage scale was \$3.50 per week, grub and transportation. The large city of New Britain and the town of Manchester (5/22) closed the week. The takes were not so good.

Continuing in Connecticut, Middletown was next on the agenda. It was also on LaTena's as well with this circus arriving four days prior to



Robbins. Interestingly, both circuses did fine business and garnered excellent reviews with Hillary Long called the best attraction in any circus in many years. Rain fell throughout the Robbins' date but did not affect the ticket wagon to any marked degree. Taking a swing northeast, the home of the American Thread Company, Willimantic (5/25) welcomed Mr. Robbins et al with beautiful weather and a perfect lot. The train was confirmed by a local reporter as being on three coaches for the performers, three large box cars containing the animals and five 60 foot flat cars for the wagons. The article noted that the past four show dates were in the rain. About 1,200 attended the afternoon performance and at least as many were present during the evening. There was a free attraction prior to the afternoon show. In discussing Hillary Long's leaping-the-gap act, the reporter stated that this incredible feat was accomplished by means of a roller skate strapped to his head. Of equal importance to some, with the recent entry of Italy into the war on the side of the Allies, it was announced that over 25,000 former Italians from the Philadelphia area embarked upon ships enroute to Italy to join the Italian Army. Many never returned to their adopted land of America, having been buried on the steep slopes of the Tyrolean Alps. Such was the fever of the times. Danielson closed out this disappointing Connecticut stay.

After a quick three stand dash across Massachusetts, the next two weeks were spent criss-crossing New Hampshire. The weather remained cold and rainy, spoiling many potential patron's plans to attend the performances. Nevertheless, morale appeared to be holding up well and the program continued as originally presented two months earlier. Obviously the performers must have been paid on a regular basis. At least there was sufficient cash flow to ensure that most necessary event. Deviating somewhat from the routing schemes of recent years, the foray into New

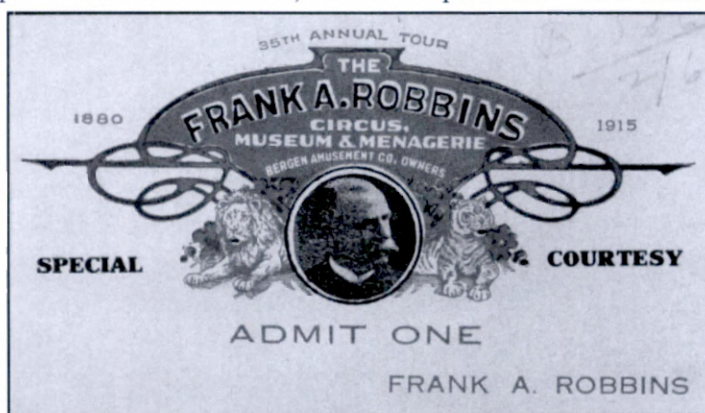
Hampshire focused on the larger towns and cities. Hardly one was missed. Ordinarily such a route would have provided substantial business but this tour was merely fair. Opening in Keene (5/31) to pretty good business, the show headed a few miles directly west across the Connecticut River to pick up Brattleboro, Vermont. Then it was bridging the Connecticut once again, and a mid-week jaunt of 50 plus miles north to Claremont, New Hampshire. Both towns were fair in dank weather. The state capital of Concord was visited on June 4th with good results as was Franklin the next day. Then it was bound northerly finally culminating at Colebrook (6/12) about 10 miles south of the Canadian border. Some of the stops in between such as Plymouth (6/8) and Littleton (6/10) were on the plus side of the ledger but overall, no really big days were experienced. A quick turn south and east took the entourage to Berlin (6/14) and into Maine at Bethel the following day. Maine represented a mixture of large and small population centers, more the normal sampling of Frank A.'s customary route. Almost all the scheduled stop-overs were repeat dates although the most recent visit was 1909 which picked up some of the towns and 1907 for others. Although Frank A. had a fine reputation in Maine, the time elapsed had

the amount of rain. They showed to a precious few that day. The weather improved immeasurably at Rumford Falls (6/18) as did business, but it wasn't nearly enough to make up for the losses the previous day. The performance was augmented by the Gabbert Family Troupe who provided very clever acrobatic routines that excited the already pleased patrons at Livermore (6/19). There is no mention of any performer having left the show, although it is quite possible.

Continuous rain plagued the show at Rockland (6/21), but remarkably business was good considering. Perhaps the Down-easters were getting tired of being hemmed in because of the constant foul weather and decided to go to the circus wearing slickers. Frank A. reached the Atlantic Ocean at Bath (6/22). With some clearing in the skies, a number of the performers tried their hand at fishing without great results. There were similar results at the box office. It was then about 50 miles up the Kennebec River to the state capitol at Augusta for a rare good day. Frank A. would take them when he got them. Dover-Foxcroft was a long mid-week run of 90 or so miles north of Augusta. Business hardly justified the effort at getting there. LaTena followed a few days later and played to very big business. Frank A.'s short jumps south to Dexter (6/25) and Pittsfield somewhat eased the financial pain of traveling about this very remote interior area.

The Kennebec River again beckoned, this time at Bingham (6/28) with good results. Ditto Kennebec and results 20 miles south at Madison. The *Lewiston Evening Journal* had nice things to say about the show which played the date

(7/1) in the pouring rain. Business was affected by the continuous down-pour but those who attended greatly appreciated the skills and dedication of the performers and management. William Thompson's superbly trained elephants garnered justified laurels for being the best in the business. Portland also experienced



Special pass issued by Robbins in 1915.

dulled many recollections regarding whether the show was a good one or not.

At Mechanics Falls (6/17) show folks were left wondering if they were playing under the falls given

inclement weather but the largest city in Maine turned in two good houses. It was noted locally that the baggage stock was in very good condition despite the recent hard hauls in the interior of Maine. Two new performers were mentioned at Portland; Ony Reuter, contortionist and Leo Brunswick, principal clown. It was also reported that Hillary Long had recently extended the gap in his act to over six feet, a prodigious accomplishment by any measure. Hiram (7/3) closed the extended Maine route with good business in improving weather.

Enroute to the ultimate destination of New York State, Frank A. scheduled a single stand in New Hampshire, North Conway (7/5), then on to Vermont for five days. St. Johnsbury was the initial stand with all-right business. To get there the train had to pass through the spectacular passes in the White Mountains. Unfortunately, the transit was accomplished during the dead of night. The four remaining locations, Handwick, Morrisville, Cambridge Junction and Swanton, were very small hamlets, hardly worth the stopover but, given the size of the communities, business was a bit better than expected. Swanton (7/10), the final stand, was located at the uppermost reaches of Lake Champlain in the northwest corner of Vermont, only a few miles south of Canada. This was the gateway to New York.

Once again, Frank A. was looking to a long stay in New York to rescue his circus. It had done so in the past and he was sanguine about repeating these favorable experiences. On July 12th the show was in Rouses Point for openers. There were not many folks living in this border town, one mile from both Vermont and Canada, but those that were in residence came to see the circus. Heading west and continuing to hug the Canadian border, Ellenburgh was good with strong praises for the performance. Another short run of less than 20 miles took the show to Chateaugay and another good day. It hailed that day but it halted prior to show time and it didn't seem to affect the turnout.



Welsh Bros. Circus crossed the 1915 Robbins route.

So far, so good. Malone is the largest town in the area and often on the schedule of the great circuses of the land, although not this year. As a result, Frank A. was a welcome diversion from the drudgery of life on July 16th and received much attention at the ticket wagon. Back into territory unexplored by Frank A. since the 1880's, our hero headed south into the heart of the Adirondack's visiting Saranac Lake (7/17), Tupper Lake, and Fulton Chain, resort towns all. Residents and visitors enjoyed the circus greatly. Reaching Boonville (7/18), the show turned north again, finally achieving its apogee at Massena Springs (7/26) on the St. Lawrence River. Business continued to be fair-to-good but never so good that the earlier poor business was defrayed. Retracing its recent tracks, the show played Cape Vincent (7/30) at the confluence of the Saint Lawrence River and Lake Ontario to fair crowds. Much fishing was done by the show folks to their considerable enjoyment. It was better the next day at Adams where good houses were presented with excellent performances.

August and bad weather greeted Frank A. at Ilion (8/2) and Richfield Springs. In fact, at the latter stand, deluge would be a better descriptor. As such, only a single performance was given and that to a limited audi-

ence. One of those nasty days in all regards. It may be recalled that at Norwich, in 1907, a similar deluge descended upon Frank A. which resulted in lost stands as the show was bogged down on the lot for many hours. This year it was different. Not in the deluge because it reoccurred, but how Frank A. handled it. This year at Norwich (8/4), the show did not bother to set up. In lieu thereof, the Colonia Theatre was engaged and a single performance was presented on the stage at night. There was a packed house but this did not compensate for either the lost revenue of the cancelled program or the significantly reduced seating in the theater. Some call it doing the

best of the circumstances. Bath (8/6) wasn't and as a result, the circus welcomed the sun and good attendance. The fact that Tompkins Wild West was coming to town on August 23rd didn't appear to affect the paying public. The occasional very good business was had at Mt. Morris (8/9) in ideal weather causing one to almost forget about the recent rains and lost business-almost. Then it was back to violent storms and stuff until the show experienced another reprieve at Springville (8/13) when good weather struck bringing out the New Yorkers en masse. However, survival could not be assured by having good weather and business one day out of four. The shores of Lake Erie presented a lovely setting the next day at Silver Creek with fair houses on a windy but clear day. Mayville (8/18), about 25 miles east of Erie, Pennsylvania completed the New York tour. Unfortunately the weather haunted Frank A. throughout the run. Rain and cold was the frequent pattern. When it cleared, the show did all right, but all right was not good enough to make up for the too many not all rights.

Sheffield, Pennsylvania (8/19) opened a relatively short route in the Quaker State. The local paper stated the performance was just OK with other recent circuses being considerably better. Was morale finally being affected by the combination of bad weather with the resultant poor business? Had some acts left? The small crowds observed that gambling

was going full blast. Was this a final desperate move by Frank A. to garner additional revenue from any source that may be available? Was reputation being set aside for survival? Lots of questions and no real answers. To make a bad situation even worse at Sheffield, it was a very difficult haul to the lot. Often 20 horses were required on each wagon. Twasn't a good day. Things were a bit better the next day at Kane where daughter, Winona, once again got a hit on the front page of the evening paper. But good days now were being measured by whether the circus made its nut, not whether it filled the tent. Rain continued to dog the show as it headed south to Johanssonburg. The lot was a mud hole. Patrons and circus folk alike sloshed about wearing rubber boots in the sticky mud. The storm cleared for the parade which was labeled as good but with few spectators. The afternoon performance was labored but presentable. The evening presentation was described as a humdinger with many performers finding it impossible to work in the overwhelming mud. The good natured audience was understanding and gratified by the efforts made.

Monday (8/23) found the circus at Ridgeway. Again Winona landed a sizable front page hit in the *Ridgeway Daily Record* amongst the continuous flow of depressing war news. With the fine weather Ridgeway locals turned out for the parade and the afternoon performance. For an unclear reason the evening performance was cancelled. There may have been a severe summer storm. Who knows; it was just another nail in the coffin. This situation did not slow down the ebullient Winona one bit as she captured another freebie headline article in *St Marys' Daily Press* on circus day. It undoubtedly contributed to the pretty good attendance that day. Meanwhile, the flimflam artists were having a big day with the rubes from St. Marys. The amounts of money lost to the slicky boys continue to be amazing. Sums of \$50 plus were mentioned. For the record, Frank A. followed Welsh Bros. by about a month. Strangely, Welsh Bros. advertised



Henry Kern, long-time Robbins bandmaster.

"Positively No Street Parade." Continuing to gravitate to the south and east, Emporium (8/25), Renovo, Bellefont and Sunbury (8/28) were all visited, often in rainy weather, with no meaningful progress at the ticket wagon. There wasn't much green left in the bucket.

Closing out August at Huntingdon (8/30) and Mifflin, crowds continued to be very small. At the former location, quick police action in terms of an arrest put a damper on the many grafter's planned activities. Police estimated that there were over a dozen slicky boys traveling with the show. The local paper noted that the performance was short which was surprising given the number of performers alleged to be part of the troupe. This may be a



strong indication that people were leaving the show after reading the tea leaves of pending trouble and no pay checks. At Mifflin, the performance was considered good but again, there were plenty of empty seats in the big top. The

101 Ranch Show played nearby Lewiston on August 28th which somewhat impacted the smaller show's take. On September 1st the unsuccessful Pennsylvania tour ended at New Freedom, within a mile of the Maryland northern bor-

der. I suspect that all employees were hoping for better times south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Thankfully, Havre de Grace (9/2) started it all off on the black side of the ledger. The weather was good, the crowds were large and the performance met all expectations. There may have been some life left in the old dog yet. However, if there was such life, it was slowly draining away. Heavy and immediate competition from the likes of Young Buffalo and Downie's LaTena was draining away the very lifeblood of our hero, adequate sustaining business. There was nothing unusual about Frank A.'s route. It contained stands that had repeatedly been played with much success in the past; towns like Centerville, Maryland (9/4), Cheshertown (9/6) and Greensboro (9/7). It didn't happen this time. On the same date as Greensboro, German Zeppelins bombed London for the first time. Eighteen people were killed and many more injured. Most were non-combatants as defined by the Hague Convention to which Germany was a signatory. The war was taking a new dimension. As serious as this event was, it paled in comparison to what was to take place a quarter of a century later, when the 1940 London blitz was raging and thousands upon thousands of non-combatant Brits perished.

Back in Delmarva, the Frank A. Robbins All Feature Show was staggering to its destiny. Still continuing south, Cambridge (9/10) and Berlin (9/11) did nothing to postpone the inevitable. On September 11th, the Publisher of *Billboard*, William Donaldson wrote the following to Frank A.: "My dear Frank, Your experience this season is like that of everybody else, only if rumour is to be credited you have not suffered quite as much as some of the others. It surely is one hell of a season. I am just back from Jackson, Mississippi, where we fought the parking charge before the state railroad commission..." This letter was sent to Salisbury, MD where Frank A. was to play on Monday, September 13th. Good timing by Mr. Donaldson for if he had sent it to the show at its next date of Marion, September 14th, there would be no one there to receive it. The

death knoll was rung in Salisbury. The show had at long last expired.

On page 1 of the September 25th edition of *Billboard*, the death announcement to the circus industry was set forth in a most theatrical fashion as follows: "BLIM! SLAM! F. A. ROBBINS SHOWS GO ON THE JAGGED ROCKS--Organization Makes a Spectacular Finish--At Salisbury, Maryland, Sept 17th (sic) Manager Robbins Already Planning for 1916.

"The Frank A. Robbins Shows hit the rocks with a final crash and closed its tour at Salisbury, Maryland, Monday night, September 13, as the result of an attachment made by several canvas men for wages due. This was the culmination of a generally disastrous season, which began with difficulties, followed with discouraging weather and other conditions, only to grow worse instead of better, until the last straw caused the management to succumb. The attachment was made in the afternoon and bonds given. After the night show everything was loaded on the trains, as usual, including the people and shipped direct to Jersey City, New Jersey instead of the next regular stand. On arrival at Jersey City the cars and other property were placed in winter quarters, with the exception of the horses which were tuned over to Fiss, Dorr & Carroll, to be sold at auction on Monday, September 20.

"Orders to ship the advance car were flashed to Col. Sam M. Dawson, manager thereof, direct to Jersey City. The members of his crew, however, were hep, and when a delay at Porter Junction was encountered they grabbed an auto, speeded for Wilmington and took out papers of attachment. When the car came through later it was taken from the train, run on a siding and a deputy sheriff was placed in custody. Bond will likely be given for it early this week, in which event it will be allowed to proceed to Jersey City.

"It is no reflection upon Mr. Robbins' sagacity or ability to have run afoul of financial trouble this season. What with the depression,

**SALESBURY MD**  
**Monday, Sept. 13**  
 1915  
 Two Performances, Rain or Shine, 2.00 and 8.00 p. m.

**FRANK A. ROBBINS**  
**ALL FEATURES SHOW**

**100-Great Artists-100**  
 Led by the World's Most Celebrated Male and Female Equestrians, Acrobats and Aerialists and Specialty Performers. Including

**50 - Beautiful Ladies-50**

**SEE—Dare Devil long**  
 leap the gap on his head.

**20 Funny Old Clowns 20**

**THE LATEST OF EUROPEAN STAR FEATURES**  
 THE MOST HAZARDOUS OF ALL BEAT-BEATING PERFORMANCES



**Tango Horses, Tango Elephants, Bunny Hug Bears, Waltzing Ponies**  
**STUPENDOUS MENAGERIE**  
**OF TRAINED WILD ANIMALS**

Newspaper ad used in Salisbury, Maryland, the last stand of the Frank A. Robbins Circus. Author's collection.

rain and cold weather he has encountered the wonder is that he staved it off as long as he did. Out of ten stands the show made crossing Pennsylvania recently it lost money in eight. In the two exceptions it but little more than cleared the nut. New England, ever previously like money in the bank for Robbins Shows, this season was spotty in the extreme and yielded two losers for every winner. Ab Scott, who started out as general agent, resigned several months since.

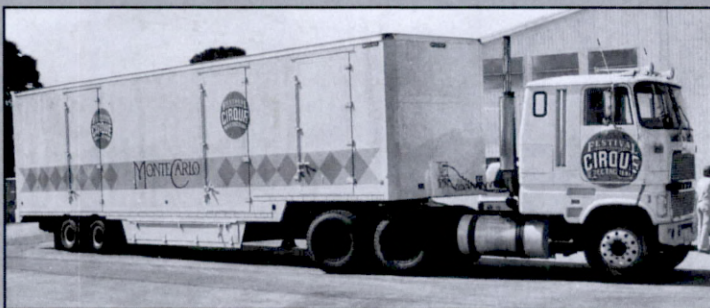
"Many expressions of sympathy for Frank A. Robbins, were heard in and about New York and Jersey City, as the news of his closing found its way about, and it was confidently predicted that he would be aided in securing a settlement with his creditors in order that a reorganization be perfected and the show take the road again in 1916."

As gruesome as the foregoing news article was, in actuality things on the show were perhaps even more seri-

ous. As related in *The Story Of Mr. Circus* by Charles T. Hunt, Sr. as told to John C. Cloutman, Mr. Hunt stated in pertinent part: "... While touring the eastern shore (Delmarva) my daughter, Charlotte, contracted typhoid fever and we placed her in the hospital at Salisbury, Maryland, for ten weeks, with my wife staying at a private home nearby to be with her as much as possible. Several days before Charlotte was to be discharged my wife wrote me to tell me that they would leave the following Tuesday and I sent \$250 to pay the balance due the doctor and the hospital bills.

"On the Sunday before the hospital was to discharge Charlotte, the Frank A. Robbins railroad circus pulled into Salisbury and my wife went to the train to visit with the folks, including some who had previously worked for us. She met Ed and Josie Simpson and George and May Barton all of whom informed her that the show was broke, so much so that on Saturday there had been no food in the cookhouse. Hearing this my wife took the money I had sent her and bought supplies for the cook house and feed for the stock and animals with the Robbins show. That was the last stand that the show ever made for their Monday business netted them nothing. Needless to say my wife wired me, telling me what she had done and I sent her more money."

So as it turned out, it was not just "another autumn," it was the "final autumn." There was nothing particularly significant happening on September 15, 1915. In Europe and Asia Minor on the battlefields of France, Tryol, Russian Poland and Galipoli, only 1,445 soldiers and sailors of all ranks and descriptions died. There would be far worse days in the near future. This was a very quiet day it seems. Oh yes, one more thing. Please record one more death in Salisbury, Maryland. In this instance, it was the death of a circus of the first rank--The Frank A. Robbins All Feature Shows 1881--1915. requiescat in pace. A lot of Frank A. died that day as well.



In 1978 Irvin and Kenneth Feld arranged with Prince Rainier III for the use of the Cirque de Monte Carlo title on a new rail show to tour the United States in 1979. The show was framed in Venice, Florida on fifteen cars, 9 coaches, 1 animal car, 1 storage car, 3 flats and 1 bi-level car. In addition a semi-trailer was used to carry audio-visual equipment. There were six wagons, a show bus and a pie car. There were three elephants, eight horses, nine tigers and chimps on the show. One 60 x 75 foot animal tent was used.

The performance included the Riding Richters; the Aerial Albarracines; Luis Munoz, low wire; Gabor Eotvos, clowns; the Wee Gets, ground acrobatics; Brian Fawcett, chimps; Elvin Bale, single trap; Karoly Donnert, tigers; Gene Mendez, high wire; Richters, elephants, Duo Dobritch, perch; Eotvos Family, bar gymnastics; Elvin Bale, space wheel and the Silagis, tetterboard. Sergio was ringmaster.

The show opened in Providence, Rhode Island on February 20. It played New York, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio through April.

On July 1 the unit opened under canvas at Circus World, near Orlando, Florida. The engagement continued until September 3.

These photos were taken by John Van Matre and C. P. Fox.



# Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART TWENTY-EIGHT

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the days the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.*

**April 1, 1916**

The first time that I was ever attracted toward circus business was in 1874. I was keeping a livery stable at the time on Bluff Street. Lorenzo Dearborn, my wife's father, was keeping the hotel called the Ogden House. The Adam Forepaugh Show was billed to show in Janesville that year, and Mr. Dearborn kept all the people at the hotel and furnished food for the entire show, which was the largest, and by far the best equipped wagon show on the road. But I was particularly attracted to the lithograph of the ticket seller whose name was Ben Lusbie and he was one of the features of the show and was billed heavy as the "lightning ticket seller."

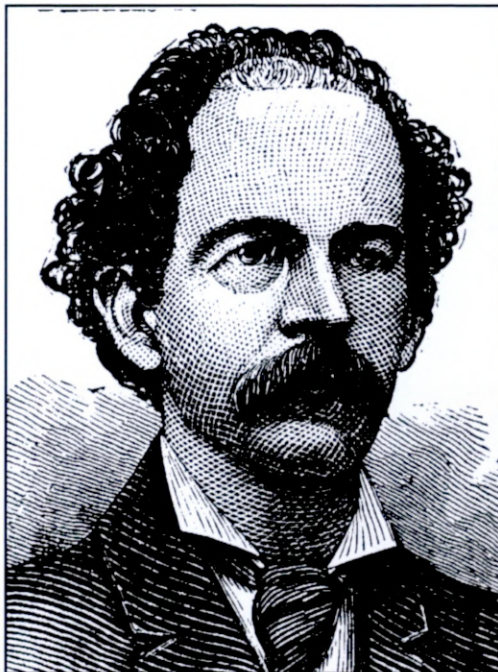
I well recollect how I spent much time looking at the different lithographs of Lusbie, which showed him both in private life and also in the ticket wagon on the road at work. This made an impression on me that evidently lasted, for it was only four years later that I was in the business with Burr Robbins and just eight years later until I went and joined the Adam Forepaugh Show in Washington, D. C. where I took the place of the great Ben Lusbie whose health had failed him.

Ben was an all around good fellow and, was the only man around the show from Adam Forepaugh that cut any particular figure. Everything in the way of the finances, both winter and summer, had been left for years to Ben Lusbie, and it was along about this

time that the show wintered in Louisville, Ky., and Ben was left there as manager and cashier of the winter quarters where the show was refitted for the coming season.

Adam Forepaugh, Jr. was a boy at that time some 12 or 13 years of age and as his mother had died several years before, his father kept him with the show. That winter young Forepaugh was left with Ben Lusbie at the hotel in Louisville with the understanding that he was to go to school until time for the show to start out in the spring. But this program was not carried out. The father being at his home in Philadelphia, Ben Lusbie soon found that young Forepaugh had a will of his own and was found to spend his time in the

Ben Lusbie the lightning ticket seller. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



ring barn training and handling the horses and elephants.

My first season there was in 1882. As I have told you before, we opened the season in Washington, D.C. on April 6 which was on a Thursday and showed there three days; went from there to Baltimore three days and the next three days we put in between Baltimore and Philadelphia on one day stands and opened in Philadelphia on Monday for two weeks' engagement.

Lusbie at that time made his home in Philadelphia and though tuberculosis had gotten a hold on him, he was able to come up and sit in the ticket wagon during the afternoon of the opening day. For me to open the wagon to thousands of yelling people with the greatest ticket seller in the world in the wagon to watch me work, made me a little nervous and no one noticed this quicker than Lusbie. But he was a good fellow and the minute he noticed it he said, "Don't get nervous, Dave, for the minute you raise the door and get to work it will all leave you."

After I had sold the afternoon house and Mr. Forepaugh came out to count up the tickets after he had finished his work, the three of us sat there in the wagon visiting and when Ben Lusbie found that my home was in Janesville, Wisconsin, he said to me:

"How well I know that entire country. The last time that we went through that country with the wagon show we stopped at the old Goodwin House in Beloit. We went from there to Delavan and from Delavan to Janesville where we put up at the Ogden House. From there we went to Brodhead where we stopped at the old wooden hotel, known as the Manley

House, and kept by a man by the name of John Young who not only took care of our people, but furnished all the hay, straw and oats for the entire show. From there we went to Monroe where we stopped at the American House kept by a Philadelphia Dutchman by the name of Joe Bleisner. Then we went to Darlington and from Darlington to the hilliest and stoniest town that I ever saw and one of the oldest, they told us, in the West. This was Mineral Point. There our people were put up at two different hotels that were old landmarks and built on a side hill, one of the landlords being an eccentric kind of a man, but a good fellow by the name of Frank Tyrrell.

"You know, Dave," Lusbie said, "in the days of the wagon show all the contracts came to me and I settled all the bills and this is why I recollect so well so many of the towns and the names of the landlords that we stopped with."

Ben Lusbie was a good fellow, made a world of money in show business and as it came easy, it went easy.

Ben later was sent to the hospital and the people with the show not only paid all his hospital expenses, but raised something like \$400 for a monument for the man who had been their friend for so many years. He was taken back to Newark, Ohio where his sister, the only relative he had, resided and the town in which he spent his boyhood days.

Nothing pleased Adam Forepaugh more than to go back to the wagon show days and tell him how well you remembered the show when it was all hitched and pulled out on the road ready to start for the next town.

Adam Forepaugh was a thorough horseman and never dealt in cheap ones. Many of his wagons were made at Concord, N.H. and his harnesses for the heavy work were principally made by the same firm which at that time was considered the highest class in the business. Adam Forepaugh during all his wagon show travels drove his own team over the road, his carriage being a one-sided spring Concord with an

extra big top to keep off the storms. It was no wonder that the old showman was proud of his show, for the country at that time had never seen so many good horses, high class wagons and harnesses together that belonged to one man.

But Ben Lusbie's long hours and hard work in the business told on him and he died when he was 40 years of age.

The first show to throw down the gauntlet of defiance to the railroads is the Frank A. Robbins show, which will be transported in its entirety this season by motor trucks. Early in May the big-tented aggregation will get away from Jersey City winter quarters for an extended tour of the Atlantic coast section under auspices, which auger well for "Governor" Frank A. Robbins. Specially constructed two-ton trucks will be used by Robbins for the transportation of the baggage with trailers for the cages, ticket wagons and chandelier wagon. It is planned to send at least three light motor trucks in advance, the idea being to cover every phase of transportation by the new method.

"I have been investigating the feasibility of motor truck transportation for upwards of a year," said "Governor" Robbins in outlining his plans, "and have convinced myself that it is the one and only proper method. I figure that we can save from \$35,000 to \$40,000 on transportation in a season and what is more, it will enable me to visit and show in towns where under ordinary conditions, by railroad haulage, it would be impossible. So far I have not quite determined upon the make of the truck to be used, but that is a matter that will be decided within the next few days."

Robbins plans to build up his animal show for this season by the addition of a number of acts and his outfit generally will be materially improved over what it has been for the last few seasons.

By means of his motor truck transportation facilities Robbins will be enabled to haul direct from lot to lot, thereby avoiding the necessary haulage from railroad terminal to lot

as is necessary when the railroad is used to transport a show. Demonstrations by motor trucks have proven that they can go almost anywhere and a whole lot of places that the railroads do not reach, excepting by circuitous routes. May 6 is the date set for the inauguration of the season by the Robbins show with New York state and New England territory as the initial stands to be filled.

#### April 8, 1916

For some two or three years when I was with the Adam Forepaugh show, both east and west, I often had a chance to visit the penitentiaries in different states. Many times I have availed myself of the opportunities and among others in the East was the Auburn prison at Auburn, N. Y. and the Michigan prison at Jackson.

For some two years there was a young man who worked on canvas on the sideshow whose given name was "Eddie," and while Eddie was supposed to be a canvasman, he was handy around the sideshow and many times was left to attend the door and take the tickets. While Eddie was supposed to be twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, he was of slight build and light complexion and did not look to be more than eighteen or nineteen. While showing in Jackson, Michigan in the afternoon while the parade was out, Eddie came over to the ticket wagon and said, "Mr. Watt, I want to go over to the Jackson state prison this afternoon, for there is a young man there that I know well. I will get a horse and buggy and I want you to go with me."

We left the show grounds about four o'clock and drove out to the prison. After getting into the warden's office Eddie said he would like to see convict number so and so. He was sent for and was soon in the office, and the meeting of the two young men was a sad one. Eddie, with tears in his eyes, said: "Mr. Watt, this is Jack," and while Jack was two years older than Eddie, they looked near enough alike to be twins. Jack was his only brother and he had been there for a little over two years. I was anxious to find out what I could about the brother and how he came to be there, but about all that Jack

would tell me was that his sentence was five years and with good behavior, he had it figured down to the day when he would be released. I told him that his brother, Ed, had always been a good boy around the show, and if when his time was up, he could not find anything better to do, to come to the Forepaugh Show and I would see that he got work.

About this time the guard came and told Jack that his time was up and led him back into the prison. Eddie and I were soon on our way back to the show grounds and while on the way Eddie told me of the trouble that sent his brother to prison.

Eddie said some two years before he and Jack were working in Chicago where Jack got into trouble and had to leave. He went to Saginaw, Mich. where he again fell into bad company and it was from there he was sent to Jackson.

After the close of the show that year, I never saw nor heard anything more of either Eddie or Jack. But this was one of my last visits to penitentiaries. My visit at Jackson was much like the one at Stillwater, Minn. with Cole Younger, for I did not seem to go back and reason over why they were there, for my sympathy all seemed to go out for those that were so unfortunate as to be there. I made up my mind that I was simply satisfying my curiosity, but it was days before I could forget the sad plight of those that I met in those institutions and from that time on state prisons in different parts of the country were dropped off the list.

Speaking of the death of "Slivers" Frank Oakley, John Agee, equestrian director in the Ringling Bros. great show, says that he recalls one or two incidents concerning the famous clown who recently committed suicide in New York. In 1899 when the show went to Johnstown Pa., Mr. Agee was working with Slivers. When they were making ready for the show, an unsophisticated chap came to the dressing tent and desired to know if he could join the circus and be a clown which resulted in a conversation something as follows: Slivers - "Ever had any experience?"

Applicant "Yes, at fairs.

"What can you do?"

"Oh, a few things."

"How do you make up?"

"Use paint."

"What kind of paint?"

"I do not know. My mother always fixed it up for me."

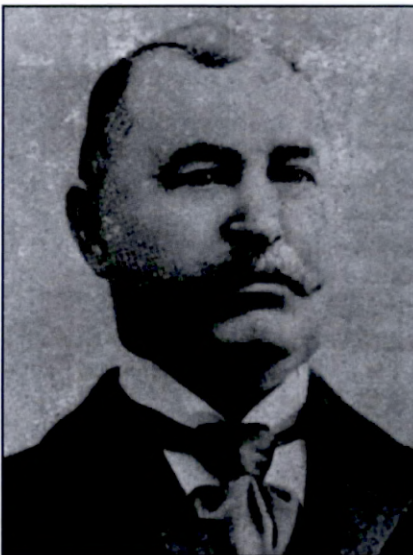
"All right, I will give you a trial. I will make you up and see what you look like."

Clowns use lard and oxide of lead in "making up." Instead of using the oxide of lead, Slivers took a bottle of glue and prepared a compound, which he smeared over the fellow's face. About that time the signal sounded for the show and the performance began. When they returned they found the fellow had disappeared and when the show came back to Johnstown the next year, Slivers said he expected to find the fellow washing his face, but like the story of the Frenchman's flea, he was not to be seen.

Many who have visited the show will recall that Slivers wore a split hat with a clothesline dangling between the portions of the parted top. One day while in Dixie, he noticed a Negro woman hanging out her clothes, her mouth full of clothespins and a number of them sticking in her hair. This gave Slivers an idea. He procured a very large hat, parted the top, stretched a line and hung up diminutive clothes. He wore this headgear many years and his "make-up" always attracted attention.

Thirty-four years ago last Sunday,

Mike Coyle general agent of Forepaugh-Sells Circus in 1900.



April 2, 1882 I left Janesville to join the Adam Forepaugh Show for the first time and the show opened in Washington, D. C. on the following Thursday, April 6th. Even in that country the show opened in a blinding snowstorm, which lasted most of the afternoon.

We showed in Washington three days, went from there to Baltimore, where we showed three days and then made one-day stands between there and Philadelphia where we opened for two weeks.

But the strange coincidence is that the same day of the month and the same day of the week, thirty-four years ago, was the same all through the month that it is this year. It is fair to say that this will not happen often, even in a lifetime.

#### April 15, 1916

Last Monday I was standing on the corner of Main and Milwaukee Streets when a stranger came up and shook hands with me and called me by name. I could not place him, and he said to me: "This is not strange, for I never met you but once before and that was several years ago. My home is in the East and I live next door to a close personal friend of yours, one that you traveled with for many years with the Adam Forepaugh show. I'll tell you something about the man and perhaps you can tell me his name. He is an Irishman, stands over six feet tall, straight as an arrow and will be seventy-six years old next birthday. Now tell me who it is."

But I knew before he had gotten halfway through his description. "It could not be any other than Mike Coyle of Weedsport, N. Y.," I said. "That is who it is," said the man, "and many a time Mike and I have visited and he has told me many interesting stories of his early life in show business, and in many of them you would be a prominent figure. Mike said all his contracts went back to you, and he would usually write you a short personal letter of happenings ahead of the show."

Mike Coyle was the railroad contracting agent ahead of the Adam Forepaugh show for years and after the death of Adam Forepaugh, went to the Barnum and Buffalo Bill Shows where he did the same work

until a few years ago when he retired and went back to the old homestead in Weedsport, where he lives with a bachelor brother and a maiden sister and where, as Mike says, he "is waiting for the equestrian director to call out all over."

Mike Coyle, without any question, has made more railroad contracts with the big shows than any other one man living or dead. Mike's work was always well finished, and if anything out of the ordinary was in the contract, there was always a letter of explanation that made it plain and satisfactory. This visit took me back to 1882, my first year with the Forepaugh show, and in some ways it is vastly different from any other, for the heads of all important positions back with the show, both in the winter quarters and on the road, were held by men with little or no education. While Adam

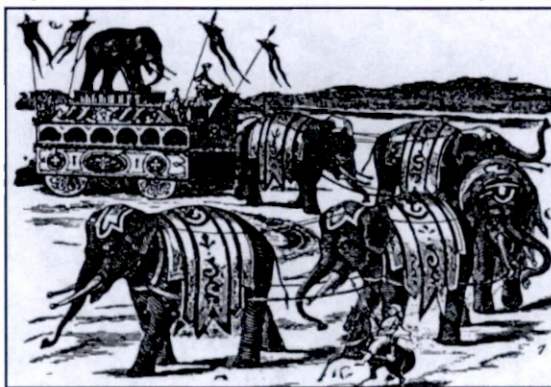
Forepaugh had but little education, he had one of the greatest business heads on him that I ever knew and many times when problems would come up, I would grab a pencil to figure it out but in many cases Adam Forepaugh would have the answer in his head before I could have it on paper, and it was always right.

Another man who held a responsible position and was employed the year around was Dan Taylor. The Forepaugh show had the filmiest winter quarters of any show in the country, covering two blocks of ground in the city of Philadelphia, and it was there that all the cars, cages and big truck wagons were built during the winter. While there was but little that Dan Taylor could take a pencil and figure out, he was the general manager of the winter quarters and looked after the building of everything pertaining to the show in the way of new cars, cages, tableaux, wagons and also the remodeling of the old wagons during the winter for the coming season.

The ticket wagon that I occupied the first year was too light and small for such a great show. Many times in the afternoon or evening when I would be selling tickets, when I would get through, the wagon would be anywhere from thirty to sixty feet from where it was in front of the

main entrance when I commenced. It was not long until I told Mr. Forepaugh that if there was any one thing around the show that was needed, it was a larger and heavier ticket wagon, one that the people could not push all over the lot.

"Well," said the old gentleman in a sarcastic kind of way, "we knew that you would bring us a few new ideas from the Burr Robbins show and this one, I think, we will have to remedy.



Now, Dave, when the show closes, you got to go to the winter quarters and tell Dan Taylor just the kind of a ticket wagon you want for next season, and he will build it for you."

But I did not wait for the show to close, but I immediately found Dan Taylor and gave him an idea of the kind of a ticket wagon a great show like that should have. All I had to do was to give Dan Taylor an idea of the length and breadth of the wagon, and that after bolting in place the three safes, that it should surely weigh six tons or more, and when the wheels were let down six inches into the ground, it would be impossible for any kind of a crowd to push it out of its place. The next spring when we opened, we had an ideal ticket wagon with every convenience, including a built in roll-top desk in the back, and the board to count up the tickets on that was fourteen inches wider than the other and four feet longer.

When Adam Forepaugh counted up his first house in the new wagon, he said, "Dave, your Burr Robbins ideas were certainly all right so far as the ticket wagon is concerned, for it is certainly a Pleasure to do business in a roomy place like this to what it was in the little old bird cage, as he called the old ticket wagon." But," said he, "your work here is too much for one man and I have hired a bookkeeper

and cashier who will take a part of the work at least off your shoulders. He will use the old ticket wagon and it will stand within a few feet of your wagon. You can turn over so much cash to him everyday and he will pay the bills and keep the books."

About this time, the great double entry bookkeeper alighted from a hack with books enough under his arm to start a bookstore, and for a man like Adam Forepaugh, this was simply bewildering. He looked the books over, picked out two and said to his new man, "Now, you send all the rest of those back where they came from, for I don't know, nor don't want to know, anything about double entry bookkeeping."

While the new man might have been a double entry bookkeeper, he was not a cashier, and soon made all kinds of mistakes in paying bills and paying people, and it was only a short time until Mr. Forepaugh told him his work was not satisfactory and let him go.

This naturally put the work back in my wagon where it had been and where, as long as Adam Forepaugh lived, it remained. My work was to sell tickets, pay all the bills, pay the people, which meant two salary days, one for the performers and managers on Wednesday and the working people on Saturday. This was hard work, especially on salary days, for often I would get into the wagon at half past eight in the morning and remain there until ten thirty or eleven o'clock in the evening, but with all shows up to that time, it was supposed to be one mans work and one it was with me, as long as Adam Forepaugh lived.

While back with the show the heads of all departments were men with but little book education, yet they had great business heads on them and everything seemed to work out as they planned. Often in the winter I had letters from different heads of departments with the show and many times it puzzled me for a few minutes and it would be hard for me to tell which way the chicken was walking. But since that time the curtain of death has been lowered on so many of these great men that if the roll of 1882 was called, there would be but few to answer. The widow of

the great showman is still living at Atlantic City, enjoying the millions left her, and the son, Adam, Jr., lives on Broad Street in Philadelphia; Mike Coyle at Weedsport, New York; Mike Bodkin in Chicago and your humble servant are about the only ones I can think of now.

I once asked Mike Coyle what Weedsport was famous for, if anything, and he said the only thing that he knew of was that it was nine miles from Syracuse.

Some of the great shows are already on the road. The Ringlings open at the Coliseum at Chicago today and after the close of their engagement there, will go directly to St. Louis where they will show one week under canvas. The Hagenbeck-Wallace Show will open on Saturday, April 22nd, at Mitchell, Indiana, and from there will go to Cincinnati where they will show Monday and Tuesday, April 24 and 25.

At last the importunities of his friends and the public have overbalanced Col W. F. Cody's natural inclination to preserve the beauties of "T. E." Ranch, his home in the mountains of Wyoming, for himself, and the coming summer, a limited number of paying guests will be accommodated. The ranch is in a beautiful valley between the Carter and Table ranges of the Big Horn mountains, the elevation of which is 6,000 feet, assuring pure, cool air at all times and possesses some of the most wonderful natural facilities in the way of scenery.

Visitors will not have the discomforts of the ordinary resort to contend with, but will be admitted to the heart of Col. Cody's family, as his daughter and her husband, Mr. and F. H. Garlow, make it their permanent home.

No more ideal spot than T. E. could be imagined for a summer vacation for professional people, as it will allow the cares and worries of the season being left behind, and the play time being spent in one of the most wholesome ways of living and one that would be a complete change. Very moderate rates prevail and these include the use at all times of a saddle horse. In addition to the pleasures to be found on the ranch itself, which include some of the best fish-

ing in the mountains within ten minutes' walk of the ranch house, to most people, unfamiliarity and novelty of the daily duties of ranch life, horseback riding and hunting, innumerable side trips may be planned into the mountains and to Yellowstone Park which is only a days ride distant.

The accommodations allow of living either at the big ranch house itself in one or two-room cabins, which abound, or of really camping out in tents located in selected spots. One may either get their own meals or dine at the ranch; in either case the very best fare is provided, wholesome because all grown on the home grounds.

#### April 22, 1916

There is the pessimist who something like a year ago spent much of his time in writing an article of more than two columns sympathizing with the owners of great circuses of the county for the reason, he said, that not only the grown-ups, but the children as well are losing interest in the circus. He claimed that the interest taken years ago by the adults, as well as the children, was waning and it would only be a matter of time until other entertainments would take the place of the Barnum, the Ringling,

Ringling Bros. Circus in the Chicago Coliseum.



the Hagenbeck-Wallace and other shows, and as entertainments they would be a thing of the past.

On Saturday evening, April 15, the great Ringling show opened at the Coliseum in Chicago where every available seat was taken and hundreds were turned away, many begging for standing room only. On the same day, both afternoon and evening at Madison Square Garden, New York, the Barnum & Bailey show turned away hundreds of people at both performances. Does this look as though the interest in the circus was waning? It is fair to say that both New York and Chicago houses were not more than 90 percent adults and that adults the world over are still looking for an excuse to take the children. To the children of today the elephants look just as large, the gilded wagons as wonderful and, last but not least of the parade, the caliope leaves the same impressions on the children of today that it did thirty or even forty years ago.

It seems to me if there was any one thing from the stock market that would sell for par or above, it would be an interest in one of the great circuses. As long as we have well filled kindergartens the big circuses will have well filled tents.

At the close of the Ringling engagement at the Coliseum in Chicago they go directly to St. Louis where they exhibit for one week under canvas after which they start out for a tour of the country on one day stands.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Collier, whom Janesville people are interested in, will leave Chicago Sunday night for Cedar Rapids, Ia., where they join the with Coop & Lent show with their eight high school educated horses. Mr. and Mrs. Collier will furnish four of the feature acts of that show for the coming summer, and it is fair to say that they will at least prove a drawing card in Janesville on May 6 when the show exhibits here. These eight horses are from the Rhoda Royal stable and are among the highest class of their kind in the business.

The announcement of the death of ex-Governor George Peck this week carried me back to the spring of '79 when we were billed to show at Fort

Atkinson, his old home, on Monday. This was the Burr Robbins wagon show and we arrived in Fort Atkinson early Sunday morning. The advance agent sent me back two contracts for lots of which he said I could take my choice. I finally decided to take one on the south side of town and immediately the big wagons commenced to unload and the stake men drive their stakes.

About this time Mr. Peck came onto the lot and asked for me, made himself known and said that he was there watching at the bedside of his sick father and asked me if it would be possible for me to locate the dressing room and bandstand on the opposite side of the lot as their old home faced the show ground on the north. He said his father was very sick and it would greatly oblige them if I could. I said that I had a contract for a lot on the other side of town and that I would immediately, pick up and locate the show over there. This I did and made an impression on Mr. Peck that was not soon forgotten. For it was at the World's Fair in Chicago that a friend of mine wanted to introduce me to Gov. Peck; when the governor said: "Dave and I were introduced many years ago," and he told the story of my moving the show to the other side of the town, "and this," he added, "was a favor that made lasting friends of W. Watt and U"

Today I received word from Philadelphia of the death a few days ago of Frank Morris, who for many years was considered the highest-class side show talker in the country, and for more than twenty years was connected with the Adam Forepaugh show. At the death of Mr. Forepaugh Frank Morris went to the Buffalo Bill show and I think he remained there for about fifteen years. He went in the business when but 17 years of age and soon gained notoriety as one of the best side show talkers in the country. At the age of 20 or 21 he made all the principal openings of the sideshow with the Forepaugh show and also made the concert announcements in the big tent.

Mr. Morris was about 60 years of



Ringling two sheet litho featuring Cinderella.

age. He had no family; in fact, the only relative of his that I know of was a brother, Ed, who for many years was in the same business.

Frank Morris was one of the highest-class orators in front of a sideshow that I ever knew. He was not the red-faced, yelling kind and often I have sat at the side door of my ticket wagon and listened to Frank make his opening and watch the faces of the people, and the expressions on their faces would tell you that they were glad to listen to such a talker. I was perhaps as close to Frank Morris as anyone around the show for in all the years that we traveled together, his box in front of the sideshow which he talked from and sold tickets, was directly opposite my ticket wagon and never more than thirty or forty feet apart. Frank Morris and I were among the early risers with the show in the morning and if Frank happened to be out of his sleeper first, he would always wait for me and vice versa. If Frank happened to be waiting for me, he would say, "Come on, boss, they tell me there is a good hotel here and if we get down before the crowd, we will get good service." If a citizen

would happen to tell Frank that the hotel was bad, he would say, "I think we had better buy a cantaloupe and a few other things and take them over to Charlie Moore." Charles Moore was the chef with the show and a good one. If you happened to have a quarter to hand him, he would always see that you got a good breakfast.

But Frank has filled in his time and gone and now the question remains just the same as before, "Who will be next?"

The last time I saw Frank was here with the Buffalo Bill show several years ago, and it was a long rehearsal we had of the years that we spent together away back in the 80's. One of the first things that came in my mind when I heard of his death was to wish myself back to the good old days that we put in together. Now this wishing business is a hard thing to cash in, but it has a value

just the same, for it takes you back to many pleasant days that you spent with friends that you learned to love through many years of association.

On Monday next April 24, will be my birthday and I expect to spend it with a few friends, the guest of the Ringlings at the evening performance at the Coliseum. To me this will mean more than spending a birthday in an ordinary way, for there I will meet many old friends and rehearse over days long gone by.

#### April 29, 1916

Thousands of people have read both in the newspaper and on the headlines of the billboards all over the United States, "Ringling Brothers Greatest Show on Earth," and this year, if such a thing is possible, it comes out with many new features, grander and better than ever, and all of Chicago has seemed to grasp the situation, for they are crowding the Coliseum every afternoon and evening, all seeming to be anxious to see and hear real live people do their different acts that to the average person would almost seem impossible.

I had the pleasure on Monday evening with a few friends to witness the greatest show on earth, and it seemed to me that it was coming

back bigger and grander than ever. As Charles Ringling told me, this year's was the largest attendance that they had in Chicago in eight years.

On Monday evening every seat was sold and many turned away. But when the show was ready to open, there was a vacant chair and an old familiar figure that millions of people had seen at the ringside blowing the whistle to bring in the acts from the dressing room, was gone. For this for more than twenty years had been the life work of the late Al Ringling, the oldest of the brothers. Agee, who for many years had been Al's assistant, was there in fall charge and everything seemed to move along in the same old way.

A familiar figure was back at his work again after an absence of nearly a year on account of sickness, and this was Lew Graham the man who for so many years had made all the announcements in the ring. It is said his voice will reach farther in the large building than that of any man in the business.

The only one of the Ringling brothers present at the show on Monday evening was Charles with whom I had a short visit and gathered a few details as to both of the big shows for the season. The Barnum shows at Madison Square Garden in New York have to turn away people both at the matinee and in the evening. Charles Ringling was not backward in predicting that 1916 would be a record year for both the shows.

The show opens with Cinderella and taking the music, the beautiful wardrobe and faultless dancing of hundreds of beautiful young ladies, many people declared that this alone was worth the price of admission. When this is finished and the real circus commences the new features engaged for the season, many of them are real thrillers.

The show closes its engagement at the Coliseum in Chicago on Saturday evening, April 29th, and it will take all of Sunday and Monday to get the show to St.

Louis where it will open under canvas on Tuesday afternoon and remain five days after which they will start out for the season on the one day stands, Terre Haute, Indiana being the first one day stand. From there they will go on southeast to Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and West Virginia and on May 27th will show at Marion, Ohio. just which direction the show will take from there is not yet decided upon.

Another old-timer with the Ringling show who crossed the divide a short time ago is Paul Cunningham. Paul had been head porter on all the sleepers with the great show for many years, was always at his post and earned big money and saved it all. Through some wise investment, he is said to have left a fortune anywhere from fifty thousand to seventy-five thousand dollars. Paul died at the City Hotel in Baraboo where he had made his home for many years and was buried in the cemetery there near many friends that Paul had traveled with for many years.

Every year the show starts out with a few old-timers missing, some of whom have put in more than a quarter of a century in the business and still the band keeps on playing and there always seems to be someone to take their place.

Back in '73 and '74 with the Burr Robbins show a young man by the name of Ike Shipley for some four or five years had charge of the sideshow and made Janesville his home during the winter. It was along in '78 or '79 that young Shipley left the Burr

The Al G. Barnes Circus 1916 band in front of the new bandwagon truck.

Robbins show and went to Cincinnati to the old Uncle John Robinson show where he remained for some time. If I remember right, 1879 was the last time that I met Ike Shipley until last Tuesday in Chicago. I had known for some time that Mr. and Mrs. Shipley were keeping a cigar store on Cottage Grove Avenue between 32nd and 33rd Streets and early on Tuesday morning I took a Cottage Grove car and was soon at the store. While Shipley knew that I was someone that he had seen before, he could not place me until I told him that my home was in Janesville. For more than two hours Mr. and Mrs. Shipley and myself went back into the '70s and visited over many days in the wagon show business, some of them hard, all night travels and yet the Shipleys agreed with me that those were the pleasantest days of all in the business. They have been on Cottage Grove Avenue for several years, keep a nice, clean, up-to-date business and have prospered from the very start. If there is anyone that has retired from show business and taken any more comfort, even if they have millions, than Mr. and Mrs. Shipley, I don't know where they are. The Shipleys are nearing their three score and ten years and have traveled the world over several times and Ike told me last Tuesday they had settled down where they expect to spend the remainder of their days. They declared my visit had done them a world of good and that whenever it is possible, I must come again.

For the first time in the history of the Barnum & Bailey circus, a three days engagement will be played in Toledo without opening the ticket wagon. Vice President H. E. Shepler of the Overland Automobile Company has made known to its 15,000 employees that he has made arrangements with Ringling Bros., owners of the Barnum & Bailey Circus to bring their circus to Toledo for three days, commencing July 27th, on which occasion each and every employee of the Overland Company will



be furnished free tickets for himself and family, together with street car tickets to take them to and from the show grounds. In addition to this, the employees' time will go on. They will not be docked for the time that they are at the circus and everything will be free. The candy butcher will pass among them as usual, but all they will receive in return for their ware will be "thank you."

For these three days it is said that the Overland Company has contracted with the Ringlings to furnish the shows and refreshments for the sum of \$20,000. No tickets whatsoever will be sold for these three days and the six performances will be for the exclusive use of the Overland Company's employees, their families and guests. This is unquestionably the largest number of passes or free tickets ever issued at one time to anything in the amusement line that the world has ever seen and will no doubt stand unchallenged for some time to come.

One big film company is going to present the greatest show on earth as far as it applies to films when it releases the mammoth circus spectacle, "The Adventures of Peg O'The Ring," on May 1.

This serial promises to surpass all other achievements in the line of serials and in order to give the mammoth spectacle the correct locale, the company went to the expense of purchasing an entire circus organization which they took to their show grounds and installed there with its entire equipment. Furthermore, it is the first circus serial ever released by a film company and is certain to appeal to every man, woman and child in the country. If there is any life that appeals to everybody in general, it is the life of the circus. There is something about the activity found around the ring, which trips us and holds us in its grasp from childhood to old age.

'Mere are thousands of people who cannot afford to attend the real big show when it comes to town, and it was this knowledge that prompted the movie company officials to introduce the circus serial.

**May 6, 1916**

About the middle of last month the

Al G. Barnes great animal show opened in San Francisco for a run of eight days. While this was a much longer stay than any other show had ever dared to contract before, Mr. Barnes felt that his show was worthy of the long stay and in this his judgment seemed to be good, for it was the largest eight days receipts that the show had ever seen and this in the face of six days out of the eight being disagreeable weather. But the Al G. Barnes great animal show was the best this country had ever seen having three rings and a platform and giving four animal acts at the same time and the performance lasting two hours.

After the opening of the matinee performance the first day, the people commenced to come and several times during the engagement, they turned them away. Mr. Barnes was so well pleased with the reception there and the high-class work that his people did that after the last performance in the evening, he gave the entire company a banquet. He notified them beforehand that all the principal performers would be expected to give a little talk, giving the people some kind of an idea how they came to be in the business and who was their first instructor. In fact, in a short way they were to give a description of their life work in the business.

Frank Gotch, champion wrestler, on Sells-Floto Circus in 1916.

After several had given their experiences a man whose hair was tinged with gray told them that he was put in the business by the grandest old Roman of them all, a man by the name of George K. Steele who had long since retired from the business and was spending his last days at his old home in Moundsville, West Va. This will be interesting to many of the older citizens of Janesville who well

recollect George K. Steele as the advance agent for Burr Robbins for some eight or ten years.

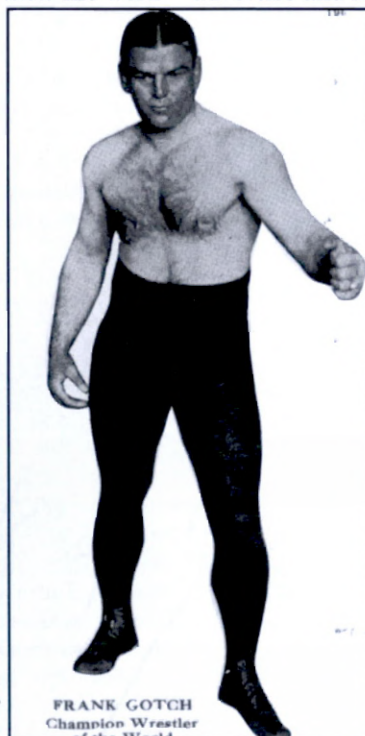
This man said that Mr. Steele put him in the business in the early '80's and that he never had missed traveling with a tented show since that time. During his remarks he went on to say that the show business of today was very different from that of the early '80's when he first joined out.

"Then," he said, "it was common talk for many people to look for an excuse like going to take the children and other excuses, but today it was different and there was a reason for it and possibly," he said, "more than one. To begin with many of the shows, especially the larger ones did much toward bettering the conditions of the show people. One who has done his part in the uplift of the business is Al G. Barnes, a man who from the very start was as high class as possible. The average person is not looking for excuses to go to the big shows but is always anxiously waiting for the show to come."

Right here it is not out of place to say that the Ringlings from the very first start in the business have protected their patrons and their one object in view has always been to give the public exactly what they advertise and make it as safe a place

for the public to attend as a church social or a county fair.

Back in the 80's with the Adam Forepaugh show there was a door tender whose name I will not mention and, by the way, he was one of the best front doormen with any circus in the country. He was such a grouch, though, and a man that could never see the funny side of anything. In fact he was such a grouch that someone around the show christened him "The Distress Signal." While he



FRANK GOTCH  
Champion Wrestler  
of the World

heard this many times, it never seemed to make any difference with him and if anyone ever got through the main entrance without the proper documents, it was dollars to red apples that they did not pass through the door where "The Signal" had charge. But that is one position around a big show where they have to turn a deaf ear to nine out of ten complaints that are made.

The Baraboo *Daily News* of May 1 sees fit to publish my letter concerning my visit to the Ringling show in Chicago, and why not? For the home folks in Baraboo are always glad to hear of anything in the way of success coming to the Ringling boys as they call them. For it is there that they have watched them with pride from the time that they played marbles on every corner around the old stone courthouse until today when they are the millionaire owners of two of the greatest shows on earth.

The Sells-Floto show, whose winter quarters are at Denver, Colorado, added another great attraction to their show only a short time ago before taking the road for the season. Jess Willard, the heavyweight champion of the world, and Frank Gotch, the world's champion wrestler, will have to divide their laurels with the baby elephant, the youngest and smallest elephant that will be on exhibition during the season. This youngster who will be one of the features of the show will be introduced to the audience every day and its exact age announced in the ring at every performance. This is the youngest and possibly the only baby elephant born in this country.

Letterhead used by Coop & Lent Circus in 1916.

The Sells-Floto show is in Kansas at present but working its way east and expects to take in all the principal cities possible in the eastern country. This week the Barnum & Bailey show will close a week's engagement in Philadelphia after which they start out on the one-day stands, expecting later to take in the western country. The Hagenbeck-Wallace show is routed through Ohio and Pennsylvania and expects to put in several weeks at least through the east. The Coop & Lent show, which exhibits here Saturday, May 6th, makes a Sunday run from here to Rochelle, Ill.

From Rochelle, they go to LaSalle and from there to Streator. From Streator they go on southeast taking in some of the best show towns in Illinois.

Janesville people should surely give the Coop & Lent shows a warm welcome and two good houses, for at least some of the feature acts of the show are given by former Janesville people. Now that the Coop & Lent show is casting around for new winter quarters where they will be convenient to their Chicago office, let us see if we cannot do something in the way of finishing at least quarters for the coming winter. The directors of the Commercial Club held a meeting this morning at nine o'clock with the owners of the show, but just what conclusion they arrived at, I do not know, but let us hope that we can offer them sufficient inducement to make their winter quarters here, where they would be within an easy reach of their office in Chicago during the winter.

May 13, 1916

The Coop & Lent show has come and gone and although not the

largest show in the world, it was first class in all its appointments. Yet what the average citizen of Rock County will know about it, he will have to gather from the Side Lights, for both afternoon and evening houses were not crowded, but in a way there was an excuse for that, for little was known of the show and the day being cold and rainy and the lot a hard one to reach, there seemed to be but little to recommend it to the average Janesville citizen except the Rhoda Royal high school horse, managed and worked by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Collier, both of whom spent their early lives in Janesville. The different acts of these horses were known to be high class, and if there was anything in the way of a drawing card for the show in Janesville, this was one.

On account of the weather the parade was late in getting started and it was well in the noon hour before they appeared on the streets. The parade was one of the finest for the size of it that Janesville has ever witnessed, and when it was headed into the main streets with two snow white horses in a jaunting cart which was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Collier, it was the signal for ovation which their friends were only too glad to give them. Mr. Collier had eight of these horses with the show, all of which were high class, especially the large black one, which he performed in the center ring. He was not only a beautiful horse to look at, but could do almost anything but talk.

The entire show gave as good satisfaction to those who were fortunate enough to see it as any show that has been seen in Janesville in years. The heavy work horses and their trappings deserve special mention, for they were as high class as any that have been seen with shows much larger.

W. T. Hanright, the general manager of the show, was a pleasant gentleman to meet, and while he said the show was not running just to suit him as they had only been out a few days and most of that time in bad weather, he said, "I would like to have you look at the show two or three weeks later when we should have better weather and everything will be running smoothly by that time."





Orrin Hollis, center, with Nettie Greer and Melvin Hollis.

Long before I got near the side show I recognized an old familiar face and voice. This man was making a sideshow announcement, and but few in the business have made as many sideshow and concert announcements as this man whose name is Cal Towers and who when a young man commenced as manager of the sideshow with Uncle John Robinson, forty-eight or forty-nine year go. To my knowledge Cal did this work without missing a season with the Robinson show for forty-five years. When I ventured to ask Cal his age, he said, "Never mind about that; my voice is as strong as it was forty years ago when I made all sideshow openings and the concert announcements with old Uncle John Robinson. So I am as good as I seem to be with the public."

After going into the show and watching the performance for a few minutes, I had a friend with me, Pat Holmes of Milton who was much interested in the show and anxious to take a peep in the dressing room and see how that part of the show was conducted. So Paul and I were soon in the dressing room where I introduced him to some old friends and a few new ones.

Here I met Orrin Hollis, the bareback rider with whom I traveled for several years with the Forepaugh show, and was introduced to his son, Melvin Hollis, who is only 18 years of age and is certainly one of the coming riders of the country. While young Melvin has one of the best and truest running horses in the busi-

ness, the track being soft made it hard for the horse to do hard work as they would on the ring. But at that he turned his somersaults and stayed on the horse better than the average rider would under the best conditions. I look for young Melvin Hollis in the next year or two to be one of the high-class somersault riders of the country. His habits are the best. He always takes good care of himself and this counts much in his favor in the business. Orrin Hollis, the father, is 59 years old and he and his wife are still riding, and their services are yet sought after by many of the larger shows. The Hollis family still resides in Cleveland, O., where they have lived practically all their lives and where they own a fine home in a good location.

In my visit with Orrin Hollis he said, "Dave, I am the owner of the largest scrapbook in the business. I commenced more than forty years ago cutting out interesting articles that appeared in newspapers about different ones in the business and several times during the winter I read this old book through time and again and often run across the name of Dave Watt as the lightning ticket seller with the Adam Forepaugh show. Another who was often mentioned in those days was Billy Burke, the clown, father of the famous actress."

Another old time rider that I met was "Stick" Davenport, who commenced his career in the business in '79 with the Burr Robbins show when he was some 8 or 9 years of age and rode two Shetland ponies. While "Stick" has been in the business continuously since that time and has been a bareback rider of note, traveling with all the best shows of the country, I never saw anyone that carries his age like he does. He has the same childish face and smile that he had when he was a youngster, and I said to him: "Stick, stick to that face and you never will grow old." He is the son of the late John Davenport who passed away at his home on the west side in Chicago only a few weeks ago.

Another young man I was introduced etc., was Norman Orton, son of Miles Orton, who for a time made his

home in Janesville and was with the Burr Robbins show in the middle '70's.

I also had a long and interesting visit with Joseph T. Condon, who has been in the business for some years and whose home is in Indianapolis, Ind. Mr. Condon is the legal adjuster with the show. He is a pleasant gentleman to meet and one who is always willing to go a little more than halfway to make a satisfactory settlement.

My visit with my old friends on Saturday last was to me like a homecoming or a family reunion after years of separation. As the ranks of my old friends are thinned out year after year, it is this that makes the bond of friendship closer. I received a letter from my old friend, Orrin Hollis, with a new route card of the show for thirty days ahead in which he said that the first three days after leaving Janesville the weather was beautiful and the business big.

After spending three days in the preliminary rehearsals, the Sells-Floto Champion Show gave their first performances of the season last Saturday with everything moving as if it had been en route all season and not like an opening day. 'Me morning was threatening and promised to be cold and wet but the threatening aspect of the weather did not influence the people of Wichita and surrounding country. This is the third consecutive season for Sells-Floto in Wichita and instead of wearing its welcome out, business has improved with each visit. It would have been impossible to squeeze another soul into a seat at the matinee, and the night was capacity.

Sells-Floto left Denver Sunday, April 23 at 4 p.m. in two sections, arriving at Wichita at 11 a.m. on Tuesday. One-half day stop was made at La Junta, Col. The stock stood the long run in fine shape, but this circus is noted for its fine stock. Three weeks before the departure for Denver a carload of dapple-grays arrived from Armour & Co., all perfectly matched, the Armour & Co. buyer having been engaged since Jan. 1, selecting the carload. Most of the performers, musicians, etc. joined in Wichita, two special cars bringing them from Chicago and eastern points.

Both performances on the opening day were full of pep, which kept the enthusiasm of the audiences up to the highest pitch. Every number was cordially received. Rosalind's somersault from horse to horse made the audience gasp. When Gotch, Monahan and Jones were introduced they were received with salvos of applause, and Jess Willard, quiet modest Hercules, created a furor when he stepped on the platform. Owing to the stringent Kansas laws regarding boxing, he was not permitted to give an exhibition bout with his sparring partner, but his demonstration of training exercises fully satisfied the people.

Lena, once mate of the famous Jumbo, Barnum & Bailey's prize elephant, was put to death in the winter quarters of the Barnum & Bailey show at Bridgeport, Conn., April 19. She had developed paralysis, and it was thought that to put her to death was humane. It required, so it is said, twenty men to tie the animal.

#### May 20, 1916

At the evening performance of the Coop & Lent Circus I met the manager, W. T. Hanright, at the main entrance of the show, and he said to me: "Dave, Father came on to the show this afternoon and I want you to meet him, for he will enjoy having a visit with you as he is new in the business."

When I shook hands with Hanright, Sr., I said to him: "You certainly look the part of a showman who has been in the business for some time." He was seated in a large easy chair at the main entrance, and being a large man, he put me in mind of my old employer, Adam Forepaugh, who was always seated in what we called the "lookout chair," at the main entrance of the show. Mr. Hanright said: "I would like to have a visit with you, Mr. Watt, as I am financially interested in the show of which my son is the manager. To commence with, I would like to know what you think of the show and the general make-up."

"Well," I said, "my idea would be that the show, after pruning it down some, which means to cut down the expenses without hurting the standard of the show and still give the

public as much or more for their money, would be benefited. You have some splendid acts with the show, some of which are high class and should be made features of, and by doing this, you could get along with less people and still give the public a first class show."

Newspaper ad for the opening day of the Gollmar Bros. Circus 1916 season.

That makes me think," said the old gentleman, "that my son's judgment is pretty good for a man new in the business, for he has already given several of the people their two weeks' notice, which means that their services will be dispensed with after two weeks, and then he will pick out a few of the best acts and make features of them. will be the only acts in the rings at a time."

By doing this several of the people could be let out which not only means their salaries, but their transportation and hotel bills as well. While the show is a high class one, there were several people doing the same acts at the same time which could be dispensed with and the best ones made features of The show was too expensive for one practically new in the business and without a reputation.

Mr. Hanright, Sr. told me that he expected to spend most of the summer with the show as his business at home did not require his attention, and if there was any place where he could be of service some time or other, it might be with the show of which his son is manager.

On Saturday last, accompanied by a friend, we motored to Beloit to take a look at the Gollmar Brothers show and found what looked to be a brand new show. The four brothers were all there and everything from the wag-

ons to the train were painted up as though they were just out of the shop. All the canvas was new, and yet the show had encountered more than its share of bad weather since opening the week before. The show has several new features this year in the way of aerial acts and a large den of performing lions which is one of the best on the road. The entire den is handled by a lady. While there were two or three acts which indicated that they had been performed only a few times and did not run as smoothly as they will later, it was the highest-class show in my estimation that the Gollmars

have ever put on the road. The afternoon performance had scarcely got well under way when it commenced to rain, and the rain did not let up for a minute. Shortly after the afternoon performance was over, and it looked as if there was no chance for the rain to let up, the lot being soft, it was decided not to give an evening performance. The work loading the trains was immediately begun which was the wise thing to do. Had they had good weather it would certainly have made a difference of \$2,000 or more to the Gollmars, but such conditions at times go with the business.

The innovation of carrying and utilizing automobiles for town and country billing, introduced this spring by Edward Arlington of the Buffalo Bill 101 Ranch show, has, it is announced, proved a great success, not only from the standpoint of efficiency, but also because of its economy. At the present time the No. 2 car is carrying three machines and these have so expedited the work of country billing that it has been found practical to make two routes everyday with each machine, thus cover-

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**BARABOO**

**SATURDAY, MAY 6th**

ing six routes in a day. Where there are only four routes two machines negotiate them, and the third is used for town billing. The men take a great interest in the autos; they quickly learn to run them and they accelerate interest in the work on the part of the billposters through the realization that



dining compartment was so pronounced that Mr. Arlington is arranging for a third advertising car and a little later in the season will again run the first two cars in conjunction. In

Murray Pennock general agent of the Al G. Barnes Circus.

the meantime, to expedite the work on the first car, an

they are doing something unique and up to date in the way of circus advertising. The Machines are illuminated with the name of the show and attract a great deal of attention from the public. In this way they constitute in themselves an excellent advertisement for the show.

Until the advance reached St. Louis both the No. 1 and No. 2 cars were run together. This was done experimentally in order to see whether or not it was feasible. The success attending the operation of two cars in conjunction, one utilized for the manager, the press bureau, billposters and lithographers, and the other for carrying the autos and a

Indian motorcycle with a side attachment is being carried and is utilized not only by the manager and press agent in getting around town, but it has also proved invaluable for checking up and in lithographing outside towns. The Buffalo Bill 101 Ranch advance is exceptionally well organized this season. C. W. Finney is the general contractor.

Thursday evening of this week a young man met me on the street and asked me if my name was Dave Watt. "My name is Murray A. Pennock," he said, "and I am the contracting agent with the Al G. Barnes show, and I believe an old friend of yours, W. K. Peck, is the general agent. I left Mr.

Peck in Chicago at noon today and came on here to make a contract for the show. Will Peck told me the first thing I must do when I arrived in Janesville was to look up Dave Watt as you knew everyone in town and could tell me just where to find all the lot and billboard owners."

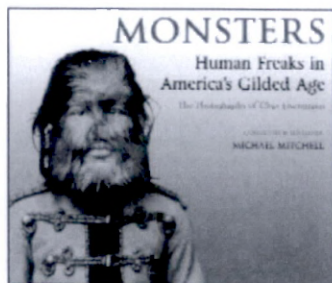
The next morning bright and early Murray was one of the busiest men in Janesville, looking after his work and contracting the town for June 9. While the Barnes show is not well known in this part of the country, it is the finest of its kind in the world as well as the largest. Murray Pennock says it has more cage animals than all other shows combined and everyone does an act of some kind.

W. K. Peck, the general agent, who has for some time made his headquarters in Chicago for the Barnes show, will be in this part of the country for several weeks. Will Peck and I traveled together for several years with the Forepaugh show. In fact, we were both there all through the '80's and I don't think Will has lost a season in the business for thirty-five years.

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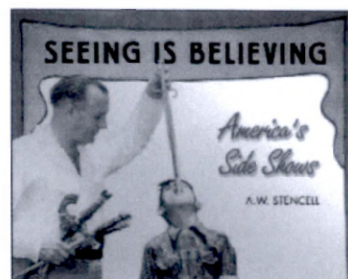
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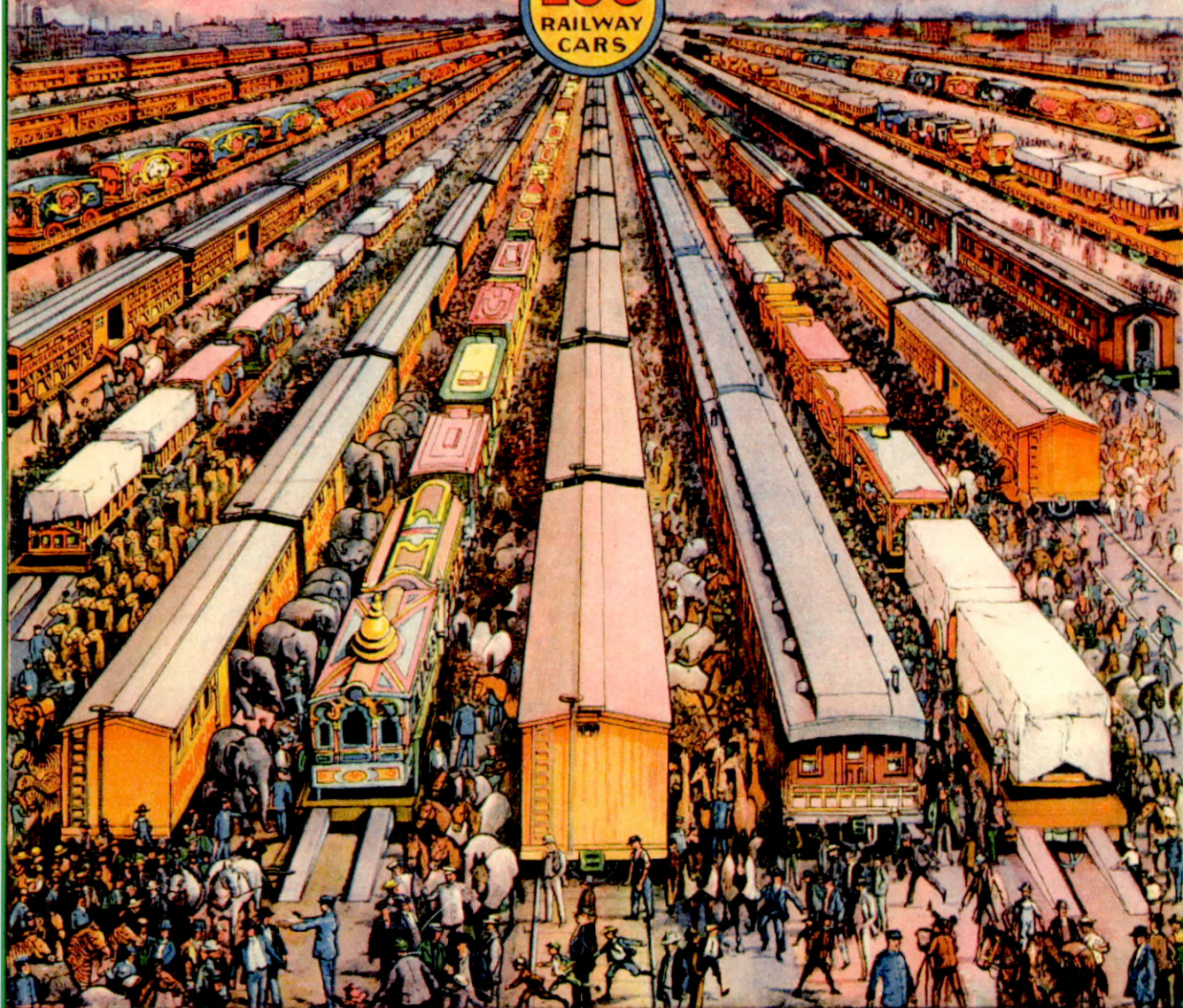


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